



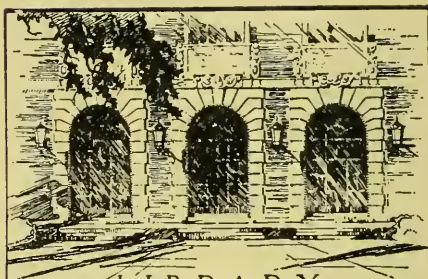
Eliza Giffard

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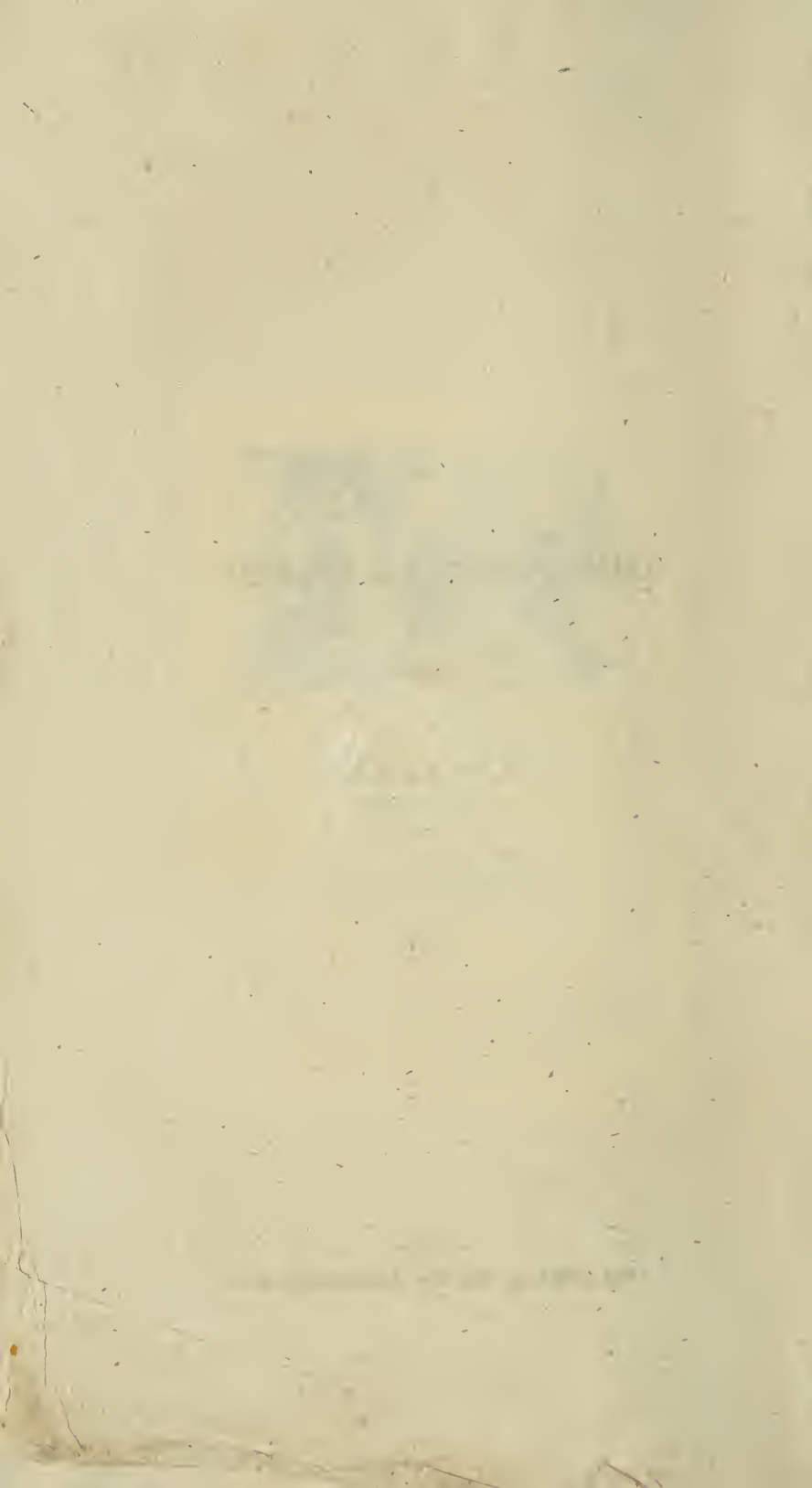
THE INVISIBLE ENEMY.



A ROMANCE.



Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.



Eliza Giffard.
THE

INVISIBLE ENEMY;

OR,

THE MINES OF WIELITSKA.

A Polish Legendary Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY T. P. LATHY,

AUTHOR OF

USURPATION, THE PARACLETE, &c. &c.

Nature! great Parent! whose unceasing hand
Rolls round the seasons of the changeful year,
How mighty, how majestic are thy works!
With what a pleasing dread they swell the soul!

THOMSON.

VOL. I.

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INTRODUCTION.



NOT far from the Carpathian, or, as they are now termed, the Krapae Mountains, which separate Poland from Transylvania, and at the distance of eight leagues from the city of Cracow, there formerly existed an ancient building, called the Castle of Vistulof. The stupendous ruins with which it was surrounded, afforded, at once, a picturesque and awful scene of the grandeur and decadence of the noblest of human works, and announced that it had been, at first, composed of a vast pile, which the consuming hand of time, and the devastations of long and disastrous wars,

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had

had reduced to an edifice of very moderate extent. At one place were seen fragments of buildings really detached from each other, but seemingly united by perspective, and lofty masses of ruins, admirable for their elevation and boldness of architecture, as also for their sturdy solidity; at another place appeared mouldering walls, thick, heavy turrets, and cumbrous battlements, which, in their state of decay, seemed to make the earth groan beneath their pressure. It would be impossible, without the aid of the pencil, to give an adequate idea of the saliant towers, raised at intervals, the greatest part of whose crown-work had yielded to time, after having, for centuries, resisted the violence of the most furious storms; of the lofty ramparts, angular piles composed of massy blocks, and of the buttresses, whose support should seem to have

have been eternal, if the irresistible force of ages had not demonstrated the contrary. Amidst these mementos of past grandeur and present decay, the eye would find some repose by lighting on the bushes, those children of chance and nature, which grew in the midst of the crevices ; on the trees, whose roots had laid hold of the mortar, which time had converted into a vegetative soil, and whose verdant tops shaded the cornices, and decorated the loftiest parts ; and also on the tough and long-lived ivy, whose thick foliage and nervous branches overspread a great part of the surface, and served as a prop to those ancient structures. Where any part was entirely overthrown, it was difficult to make way through the scattered fragments which strewed the ground they once proudly overlooked : where any part was still standing, it appeared to

brave both time and seasons, and to yield only after a most desperate conflict. At one spot, were roofs sinking under their own weight, whose worm-eaten rafters, and iron-work consumed by rust, announced at once their antiquity and decay ; at another, stood insulated masses, unshaken, on their bases, which seemed as durable as the Egyptian pyramids ; further on, had been an edifice, of which some pilasters and other fragments only remained, sufficient to shew that it had been a chapel. The outer area was separated from the inner one by a broad ditch ; over this there had been a drawbridge, which had long since disappeared, except the posts ; the ditch itself was nearly filled up, by the falling masses of the adjacent ramparts, and the bushy willows which ranged through it. The front of the tower, against which the draw-
bridge

bridge had stood, was covered with saxifrage, whose seeds, borne by the winds, attach to the smallest intervals ; their vagrant stalks grew even in the midst of the bas reliefs, arms, and trophies, which formed the crown-work, and of which some vestiges still remained.

On all sides, the spectator was menaced by accumulated wreck and tottering ruins ; his path was, at times, overhung by the watch-turrets, which jutted out from the tops of the loftiest towers, where they appeared as if they were suspended in the air. In spite of the combined assaults of wind, rain, frost, and the decomposing power of time, they were still entire ; but, since the destruction of the staircase leading to them had rendered them inaccessible to man, they served for retreats to several species of the winged creation.

Flocks of jackdaws occupied the pinnacles and the holes whence stones had been detached; and no sooner was a new cavity formed, than a new family took possession of it. They were continually cutting the air in the environs, where, out of danger of the murdering gun, they enjoyed happiness and liberty. Swarms of owls and bats occupied the interior and inferior parts.

Here the ivy, which delights in solitary and umbrageous places, might be said to hold its domain. Like the mournful yew and funereal cypress, those companions of silence and death, it frequents cemeteries, and clothes their ancient and venerable inclosures. Sometimes its tortuous and flexible branches conceal the unmerited and forgotten epitaphs of the rich; at others, they embrace, from top to bottom, those ancient crosses, or rude stones, which
the

the hands of the indigent have consecrated to the memory of a relative or friend, without a flattering inscription : whatever begins to be lost in the distance of time, or is remote from the sight and destructive hands of man, it claims for its own—the mutilated gateway, on which some legends denote its Gothic origin—the elliptic sweeps, the *chefs d'œuvre* of the twelfth century—the tottering pillars, which still sustain some arched fragments—all these it usurps, as well as the deserted cottage. Does the weight of years destroy the roof of an edifice, rot its timbers, or crack an arch, instantly the ivy appears in the midst of the ruins, traverses them in every part, and embracing them with its bands, its branches creep up and fasten to the summit of the walls. Do any crevices, or the void of a casement, present themselves in its passage,

it lays hold on them, and, aided by those new ladders, it again takes a vertical direction, and climbs on from story to story, till it covers the cornices with its evergreen garb. There, like a true emblem of perseverance, a friend and companion of solitude, silence, and oblivion, it remains faithful to the last, and perishes only with the edifice to which it has attached itself, after having long protected its old age, and delayed its decrepitude--amidst the ruins of the Castle of Vistulof, it displayed all its majesty of gloom.

The entrance from the outer into the inner area, was by a passage under two enormous arches, which had been formerly defended by iron gratings and portcullices. It was much less incumbered with ruins than the other, and, in the middle of it, stood the body of the building, which was tolerably preserved
by

by means of some modern repairs, very distinguishable from the original structure. The stile of the whole was simple, yet noble. From the center of the building rose a very lofty tower, with a winding staircase: It was a beautiful piece of ancient architecture, and in good preservation; as, except some of the steps, nothing was wanting to its entirety. A cupola of square stones, composed with much taste, surmounted it. The staircase communicated, by means of galleries, with the ramparts, platforms, and apartments. In the latter were still to be seen some vestiges of their ancient magnificence, some traces of the rude luxury of these remote times.

Beneath the castle were vast subterraneous caverns, which were still in perfect preservation. To behold them, it seemed as if time could only destroy those works which are above ground.

These sonorous vaults were still in their infancy, and appeared as solid as the rock out of which they were excavated. Of all the works of man, those subterraneous vaults alone, by being protected from the ravages of the seasons, seem to have no other termination than that of the globe itself. Such are the cisterns of Carthage, over which the Tunisians plough; such the aqueducts of Alexandria; and the common sewers of Rome, whose origin was unknown at the epoch of its foundation. In traversing the subterraneans of Vistulof, the echoes of those mute and solitary caverns repeated the sounds ten times over, and made it appear like so many voices welcoming the curious visitor into another world.

The landscape round the Castle of Vistulof, was formed to delight every soul, sensible of the varying and majestic

jestic scenes of unadorned nature. Here were seen rocks, whose craggy and bare precipices presented the image of sterility, whilst others, clothed with wood and verdure, appeared the picture of fertility: There, the eye followed, with delight, the undulation of a serpentine brook, amidst tufts of furze, willows, alders, and poplars. On one side extended a vast plain, which, when covered with the verdure of spring, resembled the waving sea playing at the will of the winds; and on the other side, the horizon was determined by a vast chain of mountains, covered with a thick forest, impenetrable to the rays of the sun, whose lofty summit seemed like a vast hanging verdure suspended from the azure sky.

Such was the Castle of Vistulof, when, about a century and a half since, it became the scene of such surprising

occurrences, as caused the greatest sensation through all the provinces of Poland; and tradition has yet preserved them fresh in remembrance, among the inhabitants of the country adjoining the Carpathian Mountains. The castle had been in the possession of the noble family of Rosomaski during several preceding generations, and, at that time, belonged to a branch of it, whose surprising history, strongly marked by the uncommon vicissitudes of fortune, and by the superior comforts of conjugal love and fidelity to every adverse trial, forms the subject of the following pages.

THE
INVISIBLE ENEMY.

CHAP. I.

COUNT Leopold Rosomaski, from his earliest infancy, gave evident tokens that the bold, active, and impetuous blood of his ancestors, ennobled his veins; and yet he arrived at the age of manhood, before he knew that his education, and expectations in life, were by no means suitable to his birth. He was brought up as the son of one Byloff, a humble peasant, who cultivated an unfrequented spot in the midst of
of

of that immense forest, which bristles the greatest part of the country adjacent to the Carpathian mountains, and which was part of the estate of Count Petrowitz. It was at no great distance from the Castle of Vistulof, which justly belonged to Leopold, but had been usurped from him by his uncle on his father's side, upon whose death his son, named Lanfranco, had taken possession of it. As Leopold knew no other than his reputed father, he did not repine at the humble and laborious line of life in which fortune had placed him, and he cheerfully contributed his efforts to those of Byloff and his son, who was his foster-brother, for their mutual support. Byloff made no sort of distinction between his adopted and his real son. He called them simply by their christian names, Leopold and Ludowico, and made them both share the same labours and the same fatigues. Their residence was in the very midst of the forest, and in the gloomiest and most impenetrable part of it. There, by un-
ceasing

ceasing perseverance, and felling the trees, they had cleared a spot of about twelve acres, at one end of which stood their cottage, which was in the rudest stile of the primitive ages; but, since Leopold and Ludowico had been capable of assisting Byloff, it had been enlarged, and rendered comfortable. At the back of the cottage, and excavated, as it were, from the forest, was a small kitchen-garden: Its only ornament was a large venerable tree, which had been reserved from the fury of the levelling axe, for the pious purpose of sheltering and protecting a mound of earth, neatly covered with green sod. This was the monument of Byloff's wife, over which conjugal and filial piety often distilled their precious drops.

In this remote and dreary situation they never saw any person; and Leopold and Ludowico would have believed their own little society to have been the sole human inhabitants of the universe, if Byloff had not sometimes, on holidays, taken them

to Dorbalec, which was the name of the castle of Count Petrowitz, to join in the festivity of the vassals. They could not conceive why Byloff had enjoined them never to mention the place of their abode, any more than they could guess what were the utility of those exercises which he never failed, except in bad weather, to make them practise after the labour of the day was finished—these were riding, and the use of arms. Byloff would sometimes make them engage on horseback, sometimes on foot; at others, he would cause Leopold on foot to attack Ludowico on horseback, and the reverse. Oftentimes he would make them both attack himself, to shew them with what dexterity he could defend himself against such odds: he would also join Leopold in an attack upon Ludowico, and then take the part of Ludowico against Leopold. By these sham rencounters the two youths became so adroit, that they were in a condition, although on foot, and with no other weapon than a cudgel, of
avoiding

avoiding the cuts of a sabre or pole-axe, and dismounting any antagonist. At length the time came which was to put them to a trial.

Leopold and Ludowico were verging towards manhood, when, one very sultry afternoon, as they were resting from their labour of hewing wood for a provision of winter-fuel, and were taking some repast in the cool shade of a tree, they beheld two females approaching them. They rose up and saluted them with the utmost respect. Their salutation was returned with no less civility. The females, who were far different, both in dress and manners, from all whom the young peasants had ever before seen, struck them forcibly by their affable demeanour, and the easy condescension with which they asked them several questions. After some few minutes passed in conversation, they bade adieu, and continued their walk, leaving Leopold and Ludowico in a state of almost stupid admiration. They stood looking after them

them whilst they continued in view, and even after they were out of sight, their limbs continued motionless, and their eyes rivetted towards the road which they had taken. In a short time, they heard the most piercing and alarming cries, and as they were those of females, they had no doubt but they proceeded from the two who had just left them. By a sudden impulse, they instantly seized their axes, and ran towards the spot whence the sound seemed to proceed. They beheld the two females struggling with four men, who were dismounted, whilst two others, mounted, and holding the horses of their comrades, were encouraging them in their violence.

Leopold, bounding like a tyger on his prey, soon came up with, and levelled two of the men, who held one of the females, to the ground. In an instant, Ludowico struck down one of the others, who held the other female; and the fourth ran towards his comrades, and mounted. Leopold was

was supporting the female whom he had rescued, -and who had fainted in his arms, when the remaining horsemen, after some conversation, drew their sabres, and began to move towards them: Leaving the senseless maiden to the care of her companion, Leopold and Ludowico grasped their axes, and advanced to meet the horsemen.

“ Who are you, base slaves ? ” cried one of the horsemen, “ and how dare you thus obstruct our purposes ? ”

“ We are not *base slaves*,” replied Leopold, “ or we should be your associates in villainy. Notwithstanding the meanness of our garb, we feel our hearts beat as those of men, whose duty it is to protect female innocence from the insults of such miscreants as you are.”

“ Insolent scoundrel ! ” exclaimed the same horseman—“ retire this instant, or you shall receive the chastisement which you deserve ! ”

The peasants made no reply, but brandished their axes, and the horsemen pushed towards

towards them. Leopold sprung forwards, and, before the foremost horseman had time to use his sabre, struck his horse so violent a blow on the head, as instantly brought it and its rider to the ground. The other two assailed Ludowico, hoping to crush him before Leopold could give assistance, but he avoided them by jumping aside, and then instantly springing forwards again, and adroitly catching the leg of one of them, he whirled him off his horse. Leopold then joined him, and their appearance was so resolute, and what token they had given of their prowess had so astonished the ravishers, that the two dismounted ones ran off, and the only remaining horseman thought proper to follow them.

Leopold and Ludowico, being thus left masters of the field of battle, returned to the females, exclaiming, "Fear nothing—ye are safe, and the villains are fled!" At these words, the female who had fainted opened her eyes, and beholding Leopold
covered

covered with the blood of the horse in whose head he had buried his axe, instantly relapsed. It was some time before she recovered again, and the first words she uttered were, "Oh! my brave deliverer is wounded!" Leopold, guessing that her relapse had been occasioned by her fear on his account, replied, "No, no, thank Heaven! my dear Lady, we are safe enough. The blood which alarms you, is only that of an innocent horse, which paid the forfeit for its guilty rider." The female, to whom he addressed himself, appeared to regain her spirits by this assurance, and desired that they might lose no time in getting out of the forest, lest the fugitives should return, and overpower her gallant defenders.

"We will escort you to your home," said Leopold, "and if they were to return with an host, we would face them *in your defence!*"

The first part of this speech, which was uttered with a most intrepid tone, was so different

different from the last three words of it, which were softened into an inexpressible tenderness for her personal safety, that it caused the lady to look at Leopold; and when she beheld him covered with blood, and brandishing his stained axe, and yet discerned in his eyes the most respectful submission and tender solicitude for her safety, it made such an impression of admiration and gratitude on her heart, as were never afterwards to be erased. Her eyes no sooner met the eager glances of Leopold's, than they were directed to the ground; and, after a moment's pause, she told her companion, that they had best be going; and, without waiting for an answer, she turned to Leopold, and desired the support of his arm. Leopold's eyes glistened with pleasure at the request: he took her arm within his, and felt, at that moment, a mingled emotion of pride and pleasure, such as his heart had never entertained before; but his pleasure was rather damped, when, on asking her whither
he

he was to conduct her, he was informed that she lived at Dorbalec, and was the daughter of Count Petrowitz. Notwithstanding the retired situation in which they lived, Byloff, whenever the weather was unfavourable to their exercises in the open air, had taught his children to read and write; and, from some few books which he had, Leopold had gained a sufficient knowledge of the world, to understand the difference which there was betwixt the situation of himself and his fair partner. He became thoughtful, and walked on without scarcely speaking another word. The lady, who perhaps guessed the cause of his silence, and was employed in a similar meditation, was equally pensive, until they reached the edge of the forest, whence they had a view of Dorbalec.

Here an involuntary sigh escaped from Leopold's bosom. He stopped, and told the lady, that, as she and her companion were now in safety, himself and his brother would take their leave of them.

“Surely,”

“ Surely,” cried she, “ you will go home with us, and give my father an opportunity of shewing his grateful sense of your gallant and generous conduct.”

“ Excuse us for the present,” replied Léopold—“ we are not in a condition to be seen there ; besides, our father waits for us ; he will be alarmed at our absence beyond the usual hour.”

“ My father,” said she, “ will send a messenger to acquaint yours with your being at Dorbalec, and he will come and witness, with pleasure, the respect which will be paid to his gallant sons.”

However galling was the separation to the feelings of Leopold, for he was enslaved by her whom he had risked his life to defend, yet he remembered the injunction of Byloff, not to disclose the place of their abode. He told the lady, that there were circumstances, unknown even to themselves, which made it improper for them to obey her ; but, seeing her much chagrined at the refusal, he gave her a
solemn

solemn promise, that, when she should have recovered from the fright which such an outrage must have occasioned, himself and brother would certainly call at Dorbalec. The lady seemed somewhat satisfied with this assurance.

“It would be ungenerous,” said she, “to press you to that for which you have no inclination.”

“No inclination!” exclaimed Leopold—“Lady, I would rather obey your commands, than be the first man in the universe; but, in this instance, filial duty——”

“Ought to be superior to every other consideration,” said the lady, interrupting him—“We must be contented with your promise of seeing us soon. You must not, however,” added she, drawing out a purse, “refuse to accept some little present mark of our gratitude—I am ashamed it is so small.”

“Lady,” said Leopold, “we have ever been maintained by the labour of our hands, and are unacquainted with the want

of money. Besides, the man who will accept a remuneration for a *good* deed, will be easily bribed to a *bad* one."

"Your discourse ill besuits your dress," said the lady—"you are not what you appear to be: We might have expected from you the language of honest plainness, but not that of polished honour and sentiment."

"We are, however," replied Leopold, "nothing more than what our garb bespeaks us—labouring foresters; and this is the first time in my life that I ever felt dissatisfied with my lowly station."

The lady blushed at this speech, and Leopold instantly became sensible of the boldness of it. A pause ensued, which was at length broken by the lady.

"Well then," said she, "I must be content to postpone my gratitude till you shall think proper to claim it. Accept, however, this bracelet," added she, taking one from her arm, "and wear it in remembrance of me."

"I will

"I will wear it next my heart," replied Leopold, as he kneeled to receive it, "and never lose it but with my life."

It contained a miniature picture of the fair donor; and Leopold, after gazing at it for a few moments, put it to his lips, and kissed it with fervour. She blushed, and bidding adieu, hastily went towards the castle, followed by her companion.

Leopold and Ludowico remained stationary until they saw them enter the gates of the castle, when they turned about to go homewards.

"Well," said Leopold, "what think you of this adventure?"

"That it is not much to your advantage," replied Ludowico; "for if you have conquered the men, the fair one has subdued you. You have lost your liberty, without the hopes of any thing in return."

"What makes you think so?" said Leopold.

"The difference of your situation in life," replied Ludowico. "There might have
c 2 been

been some hopes for me with my partner, who, as I learnt from her, was only the attendant of yours; but I believe it will be best for you to think no more of the mistress."

"Think no more of her!" exclaimed Leopold, looking on the miniature—"I could as easily forget that I exist."

"Well then," said Ludowico, "only remember, at the same time, whose daughter she is, and whose son you are. Prudence may save you some heart-aches."

This caution plunged Leopold into a train of melancholy reflections, which lasted till they reached home.

Byloff, who had prepared their meal, and wondered at their unusual stay, was gone into the forest to look for them. Some time elapsed before he returned; and the instant he entered, and beheld Leopold, whose thoughts had been too much absorbed to permit him to think of wiping the sanguinary stains from his dress, he exclaimed—

"How's

“How’s this! there’s blood upon your clothes!—God preserve us from sin! what have you been about?”

At that instant they heard the trampling of horses.

“They are coming again, to be revenged of us,” exclaimed Leopold, catching up his axe, still clotted with gore—“but let us sell our lives like men!”

“Oh, my sons,” cried Byloff, “ye have shed blood, and it cries out against you! Why have I lived to see this unfortunate hour!”

He was interrupted by a number of armed men, who rushed into the cottage. They looked earnestly at Leopold and Ludowico, and, at length, one of them said—“These answer the description which has been given us; besides, there is blood on the clothes of one of them. You must go with us,” added he, addressing himself to Leopold.

“Whither?” demanded Leopold.

“To Dorbalec,” replied the person—

“ Count Petrowitz has ordered us to bring every person we could find in the forest before him.”

“ We will go with you,” said Leopold, “ but not by force.”

“ We have no orders to use force, unless we are compelled to do so,” replied the person.

“ Lead on then,” said Leopold, “ and we will all attend you.”

Byloff groaned, and lifted up his eyes to heaven—“ My sons,” cried he, “ are you guilty or innocent ?”

“ We are spotless as the sun,” replied Leopold—“ We have done nothing but what you will commend us for doing.”

“ Enough,” cried Byloff—“ then let us go.”

They all left the cottage, the horsemen surrounding Byloff, Leopold, and Ludowico; the two latter of whom, fearing some perfidious design, refused to be disarmed, and carried their axes on their shoulders. When they arrived at the castle,
they

they found the Count in the great hall, surrounded by his domestics, and numbers of his vassals, whom he had summoned on the occasion. At his side were seated the two females whom Leopold and Ludowico had preserved. The Count turned to his daughter, and asked if these were the persons. She answered in the affirmative.

“Who are you?” demanded the Count, looking stedfastly at Leopold.

“I only know,” replied he, “that I reside in the adjoining forest, and that those you see with me, are my father and brother.”

“Is this true?” said the Count, turning to Byloff.

“Part is true, and part is not,” replied Byloff—“He is not my son—the other is.”

“Why,” said the Count to Leopold, “do you tell me what is not true?”

“I scorn it,” replied Leopold, astonished.

“He does not know but he has told you

the truth," said Byloff—"Till this instant, he never doubted that he was my son."

"Whose son is he then?" demanded the Count.

"He is the only son of the late Count Gustavus Rosomaski," replied Byloff.

"Have a care, old man," cried the Count—"I have heard that that child died in its infancy."

"So it was falsely reported by his uncle and guardian, the late Theodoric Rosomaski, in order to get the title and estate into his own family," said Byloff—"This is the real heir, whom I rescued from the untimely grave to which he was doomed by his unnatural uncle."

"Who are you?" demanded the Count, "and what proofs have you of the truth of so bold an assertion?"

"I was one of the domestics of the good Count Gustavus Rosomaski," replied Byloff, "who died suddenly, leaving this son, an infant and an orphan, as his lady had
preceded

preceded him to the grave only some few weeks before. The uncle became the guardian of the nephew, who, after his mother's death, was nurtured by my wife, with this other youth, my own son. Theodoric, for some months after his brother's death, was more than kind—he loaded me and my wife with favours; and having thus, as he thought, prepared us to enter into his sordid and cruel views, he proposed to us to substitute his own son, then an infant, in the place of the legitimate heir. We were struck with horror at so foul a design; but, as we imagined that a heart capable of forming it, would hesitate at no means of putting it into execution, we could not dare to express our detestation openly. Theodoric, seeing that we hesitated, gave us money, and made us the most splendid promises. We pretended to be overcome by his liberality, and to give into his scheme. The day was appointed, when his own son Lanfranco, the present wrongful possessor of the title and possessions of

Rosomaski, was to be brought into the castle, and received by my wife, in the place of the son of Gustavus, who was to be sent away. Having concerted measures with my wife, we rose before the break of the day which was to have witnessed this horrid deed. We packed up whatever property we had saved from the liberality of the good Gustavus and his lady, and mounted on two horses, which we took out of the stables. My wife carried our son, and I the young Count. As we thought ourselves unsafe, from Theodoric's pursuit, in any inhabited place, we sought the most gloomy and unfrequented part of the forest which is on your domains, where we erected a hut, and, by imperceptible degrees, formed a comfortable retreat. My wife died several years ago, but not till after, at her own most earnest request, she had made a journey to Cracow; where, in the presence of a priest and a notary, both of whom were pointed out to us as men of unblemished character and integrity, she
made

made an oath of the facts which I have just related. A written copy of that deposition was, at the same time, signed by her, and left with each of those two persons, to remain unopened till Leopold, which is the name of the real Count Rosomaski, should arrive at a proper age to assert his rights. Until the present day, we have never been disturbed in our retreat, where I have constantly inured the boys to hardships and labour; and as, in my youth, I had been a soldier, and had seen some real service, I trained them up to arms, to render Leopold worthy of the rank to which he was born, as well as capable of contending for it, and to give him my son Ludowico for an able auxiliary. You may judge of the progress which they have made under my instructions, by their bloody feats this day; of the cause of which I am still ignorant, as I came home only some few moments before your people arrived to bring us hither; but as I have always endeavoured to impress upon their minds, never to use

their strength but against some violent aggression, or act of injustice, I remain confident that they will be found not to have abused it."

During this narrative, the Count was attentively eyeing the two youths, whose athletic, though green manhood, undaunted looks, and intrepid demeanour, called forth astonishment and admiration in all the spectators. His attention, however, was chiefly drawn towards Leopold, whom this narrative more nearly interested. It is impossible to describe his agitation. Rage and indignation, at the unnatural conduct of his uncle; surprise, at learning the elevated station to which he was born; joy, at having it disclosed in the presence of the lovely daughter of the Count Petrovitz, whose eyes sufficiently testified her pleasure at the disclosure—all formed together such a mixture of passions, as scarcely ever before struggled together in the same breast, and at the same instant.

An interval of silence succeeded the narrative.

narrative. Every spectator had his eye upon Leopold, who, however, remained mute and thoughtful. At length, Count Petrowitz broke silence:

“It is a dangerous secret which you have been disclosing,” said he—“The present *reputed* Count Rosomaski is now well established in his possession: He is rich and powerful, Leopold is poor and friendless.”

“But my arm is not nerveless,” exclaimed Leopold—“I will challenge Lanfranco to maintain his title against mine, hand to hand, and be his the spoils who wins the day.”

“My daughter Rhodiska, and her companion,” said the Count, “have given me an astonishing account of your prowess and intrepidity; but what can you do singly against numbers? for I am assured that Lanfranco will never trust his title to such a decision.”

“I know not what I may be able to do singly,” replied Leopold, “but I feel a something in my heart, which will make
me

me spurn at danger, and urge me on to conquest."

As he uttered these words, he ventured to cast a look at Rhodiska, who crimsoned, and cast her eyes towards the ground.

"Let every one, but this young man, leave the room," said the Count; "and I charge you that not a syllable transpire of what you have heard. Let every attention be paid to the old man and his son."

"Brave youth!" added the Count, so soon as he was left with Leopold, "I feel and tremble for your situation. If you have a just claim to the title and possessions of Rosomaski, yet you have a most crafty and powerful competitor. I think I know his character—he will go any length to gratify his ambition."

"Is there no law then in Poland?" said Leopold.

"Certainly," answered the Count; "but there, as in every other country, it is only for those who can afford the expence of it."

"Then,

“Then I will rely on mine own arm for redress,” said Leopold—“Lanfranco shall either yield me my right, or deprive me of life.”

“Be not rash, if you would prosper,” said the Count—“As some poisons are antidotes to others, so is policy the surest weapon against a designing enemy. Take my advice—Our gracious sovereign knows the value of a good soldier, and rewards him according to his merit, be his rank what it may. The army is now going to make a campaign on our frontiers: go and join it. Your skill, bravery, and intrepidity, will, in all probability, cause you to be distinguished, and that is the readiest road to favour and fortune. You may then enter the lists with Lanfranco, upon equal terms.”

“Count,” replied Leopold, “your advice is highly reasonable, and I will follow it: I will seek danger in the tented field; and, when my sword shall have been accustomed

tomed to victory, it will fall the heavier on the head of Lanfranco."

"May Heaven crown you with success!" said the Count—"and whatever I can do to ensure it to you, shall not be wanting. I will write to Colonel Zulmandorf, whose regiment is one of those about to take the field, and request him to take you under his protection. If his answer be favourable, as I expect from our long acquaintance, you shall depart in a manner which would not disgrace you, even if you were the *acknowledged* Count Rosomaski."

After Leopold had uttered all that a grateful heart could dictate, the Count insisted upon his supping with him, and tarrying the night, as it would be then late. Leopold would have joined Byloff and his son, but the Count insisted on his sitting at his own table. Leopold's heart beat high at the honour of being admitted a companion of the Count, although he would have preferred the company of his father and

and brother, as he still termed them, if it had not been for the presence of the lovely Rhodiska. During the whole supper-time, she was particularly attentive to help him, although he ate scarcely any thing; and she seemed more disposed to prevent his wants, than to have any of her own. After supper, they conversed for several hours; and the Count and his daughter were surprised at the propriety of Leopold's ideas, the quickness of his perception, and the dignity of his expression, which were far beyond what might have been expected from the situation in which he had been brought up. Amongst the books, however, which Byloff had brought away from Vistulof, was a translation of Plutarch's Lives into the Polish dialect, which Leopold had ever perused with avidity, as if to ground himself on the example of those illustrious characters; and thence he had drawn the chief of his maxims, and formed his ideas. At length they retired for the night, and Leopold was left at liberty to
indulge

indulge the reflection of his happiness, in being under the same roof with his beloved Rhodiska.

CHAP. II.

ON the first appearance of the sun above the horizon, Leopold rose, and met Byloff and his son in the hall. He acquainted them with the Count's advice, and his own resolve.

“ I approve of both,” said Byloff—“ It was the very plan which I myself had laid down for you, when you should have arrived at a proper age : that season is now come. Excuse the dreadful suspicions which I entertained of you yesterday ; my son has
convinced.

convinced me of the injustice of them. The Count Rosomaski will never shed blood but in a just cause. Go, and may the shades of your ancestors hover over, and protect you in the hour of danger!”

Ludowico insisted on accompanying Leopold.

“Go, my son,” cried Byloff—“fight by the side of your young lord, and prove yourself worthy to support him, when he shall return to claim his right.”

“But how can we leave you alone, my dear father?” cried Leopold.

“Give yourself no trouble about me,” replied the old man—“The Count Petrowitz will, I dare say, permit me to continue in our old abode; and though my head begins to shew the wintry season of life, yet my arm is not withered. I shall be able to support myself till your return, and I shall depart in peace when I have seen you in your proper station.”

Count Petrowitz pressed Leopold to remain at Dorbalec; but, as Byloff intreated
to

to be permitted to live and die in his old retreat, and to be buried in the same grave with his wife, Leopold was determined, notwithstanding the happiness of enjoying the presence of Rhodiska, not to quit Byloff till Colonel Zulmandorf's answer should arrive. He pleaded to the Count, as an excuse, that it was necessary he should join his endeavours to those of Ludowico, to render the situation of their father as easy as possible during their absence. The good Count acquiesced in Leopold's grateful resolution, and granted him whatever part of the forest himself or his companions might wish to inclose. When they returned thither, they began to fell trees, and saw and split them into logs, until they had stacked sufficient fuel to have lasted two or three years. They then grubbed and ploughed the land, and put it into such a state of preparation, that Byloff would have only the easiest labour of husbandry to undergo, to raise much more than sufficient for his support.

Every

Every inquiry which had been made by Count Petrowitz, to discover the authors of the violence offered to his daughter, had proved abortive. On searching the spot where the ravishers had been defeated, nothing but the traces of the blood remained—the bodies of the slain had been all hastily removed. Strong suspicion, however, attached to Lanfranco, who had demanded Rhodiska in marriage, but had been peremptorily refused by her: he was, moreover, known to be haughty, violent, and revengeful. Count Petrowitz, who had no idea, when Lanfranco made proposals to him to unite the two families, that he had come to his honours by such foul means, approved the match, which would have destroyed those quarrels, so common in Poland, between the vassals of two neighbouring lords, which frequently involved the chiefs in sanguinary feuds, and mortal hatred. He recommended a serious consideration of the offer to his daughter, but she declared a decided aversion to
Lanfranco,

Lanfranco, whose manners were infinitely more calculated to excite disgust, than the tender passion, in the breast of a timid and susceptible maiden. Indeed, his own was actuated by no sentiment of love: He sought her hand from motives of interest and policy, and in pursuance of the advice of his father, who had died about two years before. Theodoric was well aware, that the real owner of the honours of Rosomaski might be in existence, although he had never heard a syllable concerning Byloff, since his flight. He had, therefore, by exactions from the tenants, amassed a considerable property, which he meant to have secured, let what would happen. This, besides a considerable property which was really his own, he had left to his son, whom he acquainted with the foundation of his title to the domains of Rosomaski, and advised him to seek the daughter of Count Petrowitz, who was the next considerable person in that neighbourhood, as the means of securing his usurped honours. This,

therefore, was the only motive of Lanfranco ; and, as he was considerably more affluent than Count Petrowitz, he imagined his proposal would have been readily accepted. But, as the power of love had not humbled his arrogance and self-conceit, he made his approaches with so much haughtiness and confidence, as caused the gentle Rhodiska to shrink from them. She beheld in him, one who would be rather her imperious master than her tender companion. She disguised nothing of her sentiments, on this head, from her father, who doated on his only child, and put off Lanfranco with as much care as possible, to avoid giving offence.

Lanfranco, who had ever been accustomed to an immediate compliance with his will, and expected it on this occasion, was so excessively mortified, that his resentment made him determine to drop solicitation, and obtain Rhodiska by force. They were his emissaries, therefore, who had been chastised by Leopold and Ludowico ;

wico; and he was no sooner informed of the defeat of his plot by the fugitives, than he caused the bodies of the slain to be removed from the scene of action.

Having thus, as he imagined, removed all possibility of a discovery, he thought it time to endeavour to clear himself from all suspicion, by calling at Dorbalec, and expressing the utmost indignation against the authors of the outrage. He played this part with so much seeming sincerity, that Count Petrowitz, although his suspicions were not in the least staggered, could not avoid thanking him for the interest which he took in the business. Lanfranco thought this a proper opportunity to renew his proposal, and he hinted, that, by bestowing his daughter's hand upon him, the Count would free himself and her from all danger of a renewal of the attempt. Count Petrowitz knew no better way of getting rid of him, than by referring him to his daughter, whose consent, he told him, must be obtained previously to his
own,

own, as no consideration whatever should induce him to offer the least violence to her inclination, in a matter in which all her future happiness was concerned. Lanfranco asked permission to converse with Rhodiska once more on the subject, which the Count readily granted, and told him, that he would find her, he believed, in the garden.

When Lanfranco approached Rhodiska, she was talking with Dorothea, her confidential attendant, who was the same that was with her in the forest. Lanfranco acquainted Rhodiska, that he had obtained her father's permission to speak to her in private, and desired she would dismiss her attendant; but Rhodiska replied, that she had no reserve whatever from the person who attended her, and that she might as well hear what he had to say to her then, as be informed of it the instant he left her. Lanfranco was somewhat disconcerted at so unpropitious a beginning, from which he augured unfavourably, and was not mis-

taken. He renewed the offer of his hand—told her it was more necessary now than ever, after the late attempt, that she should put herself under the care of a person who could prevent a repetition of it, which her father's advanced age rendered him incapable of doing effectually: he made an ostentatious display of the advantages which would accrue to her from being united to him; and concluded by hoping, that he might consider himself as her suitor, and, consequently, as having a right to protect her against all the world. Rhodiska had scarcely patience to hear out this tedious harangue, from one whom she thoroughly despised. She replied with the utmost coldness, that she was too young to entertain any ideas of marriage, and indeed had never bestowed any consideration on the subject; but she knew it must be an object of so much importance to her future happiness, that she should only bestow her hand where she believed she could safely trust her heart. She had never felt it

it in the least degree interested in his behalf, and therefore could give him no encouragement, much less permission, to consider himself as having a right to interfere in her concerns. As to any repetition of the late violence, she should take care never to stir out of the castle-walls, without such security as would be sufficient to chastise those who made the attempt. Lanfranco was stung to the soul by this indifference, but he bridled his resentment, that he might not be denied admittance to Rhodiska, whom he determined to reduce at all hazards. He only desired she would not form any hasty resolve, but give his proposal a serious consideration, and he entertained no doubt but the expediency of accepting it would strike her in a proper light.

As Leopold always visited at the castle, when his labour was not required at home, he chanced to enter the garden at the very moment when Lanfranco was about to take leave of Rhodiska, and, as they were in one

of the cross walks, he was close to them before he perceived them. He bowed, and would have retired, but Rhodiska prevented him. Leopold had never seen Lanfranco before, but, by some secret impulse, most probably that of jealousy, he instantly experienced an extreme aversion towards him; and it was evident, in spite of all Lanfranco's endeavours to conceal it, that he was surprised and offended at his interruption. Although he was before about to go away, yet he still remained fixed to the spot. Rhodiska received Leopold with all that frankness which she had ever shewn him, and every word she uttered to him clouded the brow of Lanfranco. As he perceived that Rhodiska paid no further attention to him, he darted a malignant glance at her, and went off without uttering another syllable. Rhodiska walked towards a part of the walls, whence they had a view of the adjacent country, and continued there until she saw Lanfranco ride away on full gallop. Leopold misconstrued

strued this desire of Rhodiska to have a last view of the person who had rode off, into a partiality for him, and was lost in silent gloom, whence Rhodiska roused him, by asking what was his opinion of the person who had just left them?

“I cannot but think well,” replied Leopold, “of a man of whom you appear to entertain a favourable opinion.”

“What makes you imagine so?” said she.

Leopold was at a loss for an answer, as he could not betray any symptoms of jealousy to a person, to whom he had never dared to utter his love. He hesitated, and at last stammered out, that he inferred it from seeing them together, and from the trouble which she took to behold the last of him.

“That trouble was for your sake, and not for his. I did not dare to introduce you to Lanfranco, lest your indignation should have broken out on the spot, and

I was happy when I saw him leave the castle."

"Ah!" cried Leopold, unable to contain his emotions, "you dreaded lest I should have felled him to your feet."

"Why not," replied she, "that he might have felled you? You cannot suppose that I should wish him better than you, my dear Leopold!" (Here she blushed at the imprudence of her tongue, and endeavoured to rectify it, by putting it all to the account of gratitude)—"You," added she, "who are my deliverer, and entitled to my warmest gratitude!"

"I relieve you from that," cries Leopold—"let it not stand in competition with——"

"What?" said she, perceiving that he hesitated.

"Any sentiments which you may entertain in his favour," replied Leopold, with a chagrin which he could not disguise—"I could renounce vengeance, and almost

most forget my own private injuries, rather than destroy your happiness."

"The sentiments which I entertain for Lanfranco," said Rhodiska, "need not prevent your asserting your right: I only wish you to reserve your vengeance, till you can give way to it without danger to yourself—You do not know my heart."

Another blush, deeper than the former, overspread her face; and, finding she could not conceal her confusion, she desired her attendant to acquaint Leopold with what had passed between herself and Lanfranco, whilst she went to give the same information to her father. She then went towards the castle.

"You are wrong," said Dorothea, "to suspect that my young mistress has any partiality towards Lanfranco: she despises him, and you will be convinced of it, when I acquaint you, as she has ordered me to do, with what has just passed between them."

She then gave him the detail; and the hatred which Leopold had borne to Lanfranco was trifling, compared to what he felt when he knew that he aspired to the hand of Rhodiska, of which he was before totally ignorant. Rage swelled his bosom, so as to prevent him from making any reply.

“Do you then disbelieve what I have been telling you?” added Dorothea.

“Not a syllable of it,” replied Leopold — “but it has inflamed my hatred of a man who has dared to aspire to Rhodiska.”

Leopold had no sooner uttered these words, than he cursed the phrenzy which had occasioned his imprudence. “I have discovered my sentiments,” said he — “I have dared to love Rhodiska, and passion has extracted that declaration which I had resolved to bury in my breast, at least till I could reveal it with some degree of propriety. Do not, my dear Dorothea, disclose my audacity to your mistress, or she will

will no longer treat me with that frankness which is all my pleasure on earth."

"I shall disclose nothing to my mistress," replied Dorothea, "which will do you any injury in her opinion. Do you only take care of yourself, and not let temerity ruin your cause. You are not yet in a situation to come to an open rupture with your rival. Manage your own matters well, and you shall not want a friend with my mistress."

Leopold seized Dorothea's hand, and imprinted so many kisses on it, that she told him to cease his raptures; for if her mistress should chance to be looking out of the window, and witness them, it would, perhaps, be a difficult matter to make her believe that he was only making love to her by proxy.

Dorothea then left him, and he hastened from the castle to bury himself in the forest, and reflect, undisturbed, upon what had passed, which, like the fuel to fire, had increased his passion, by feeding it

with hopes. He sought out a remote spot, and found it in a small glen at the foot of an eminence, composed of rugged masses of rocks, interspersed with trees, and covered with thick underwood. Here he threw himself on the ground, and shutting his eyes, that his senses might be distracted by no exterior objects, he soon became insensible to every thing but Rhodiska. He had lain a considerable time in this situation, when he suddenly heard a noise, as of persons making their way through the bushes. As he imagined that cattle only could visit so solitary a place, to which there were no traces of footsteps, he never thought of concealing himself, until the sounds approached nearer, and he discerned some human voices. He then started up, and threw himself into some thick bushes, which grew between two rocks, where he was concealed so effectually, that it would have been very difficult to have discovered him, even if a strict search had been made. He was scarcely settled in his
hiding-

hiding-place, before he saw four men enter the glen, and seat themselves very near the spot which he had quitted the moment before. He recognized Lanfranco among them, and was near enough to hear almost every word that passed. From their discourse he gathered, that the moment Lanfranco had quitted Dorbalec, he had hastened home, and dispatched some of his emissaries to discover who was the person he had seen with Rhodiska. These emissaries had learned, from the whispers among the domestics, that he was one of those two men who had rescued Rhodiska in the forest. They had moreover picked up, that he assumed to be the *real* Count Rosomaski, the son of the late Gustavus. Leopold heard Lanfranco tell the other persons all these discoveries, and urge them on to vengeance against him, not only as his own personal enemy, but as one of those who had handled them so roughly in the forest, and slain their comrades. He heard him make them the most unbounded

promises, if they could contrive to get himself, or Rhodiska, or both, into his power. After much deliberation on the means of effecting these purposes, he heard them agree, that two of them should go to Dorbalec under some pretence or other, but, in reality, to bribe some of the Count's domestics, particularly Dorothea; for which end Lanfranco gave them a purse, and bade them not to be sparing either of money or promises. Having thus closed their consultation, they arose, and left the spot. Leopold, during the whole of this conference, was so enraged, that he was more than once upon the point of rushing out and attacking the whole party. How ardently did he wish that Ludowico had been with him, that he might have taken instant vengeance! He was, however, happy to be acquainted with Lanfranco's designs; and they were no sooner out of hearing, than he left his concealment, and returned to Dorbalec, to acquaint the Count with what had passed.

Count

Count Petrowitz immediately rang for one of his domestics, and enquired whether any of the domestics of Vistulof were then in the castle? The answer was, that there were two of them then in the castle. They had come to inquire for their master, who, they said, was wanted at home, on very particular business, and they knew not where to find him. After being answered in the negative, they had however remained, and were still drinking in the servants' hall. When the domestic had retired, Count Petrowitz informed Leopold, that he had just that instant received a messenger from Colonel Zulmandorf, who had acquiesced in taking his young friend under his protection, with the greatest readiness; but his letter mentioned, that, if he wished to arrive before the army marched, he must set out immediately with the messenger. Although it panged Leopold to the soul to think of leaving Rhodiska, yet he did not hesitate to declare his intention of setting out early the next morning.

“ You

“ You are right,” said the Count—
“ You will then, defeat the malice of Lanfranco against your own person ; and as for my daughter, I will take care that she shall never leave the castle without a strong escort ; and I will cause every person who enters these walls, to be so strictly watched, that they shall have no opportunity of doing her any violence. But as Byloff is the only living witness of the justice of your claim, he should be placed out of the reach of your enemy, which he cannot be, if he remain alone in the forest. You must, therefore, prevail upon him to come to Dorbalec, where he may live in safety, and at his ease.”

Leopold quitted Dorbalec and returned to Byloff, whom he prevailed upon to accept the Count's offer of residing at the castle, till the return of Leopold and his son.

Early the next morning, they all repaired to Dorbalec, where they found the messenger waiting for them, and two fine
caparisoned

caparisoned horses ready for Leopold and Ludowico. Count Petrowitz gave Leopold a letter of introduction to Colonel Zulmandorf, and, also presenting him with a purse of gold ducats, told him, that whenever he wanted more, the Colonel would furnish him, as he had requested him to do so in the letter. Leopold, whose heart was too full to permit utterance to his gratitude, was going to throw himself on his knees to the Count, who prevented him by catching him in his arms, and having embraced him, recommended him to Heaven. Leopold was retiring, when he met Rhodiska, whom he did not expect to see so early in the morning.

“ I am going to leave you, Madam,” said he.

“ So my father has informed me,” said Rhodiska, with an unsteady tone.

“ And I wished for this opportunity of paying my respects to you,” added he—
“ Whatever fortune may have in store for me, believe me, I shall never fail to en-

tain a proper sense of the condescension of the Count and yourself towards me. Pardon my presumption—but this bracelet, which I received from your fair hands, shall never be separated from me till death: I shall, as I view it night and morning, offer up my prayers for the lovely original, who will be my spur to deeds of glory—Would I dared to say, that she would be my sole object of success!”

“Go,” said Rhodiska, with her face half averted, to conceal the gushing tear, “and do not doubt that I shall pray Heaven to grant it you, and to permit you to return in safety.”

Rhodiska then held out her hand, which Leopold kneeled to receive, and imprinting a fervent kiss, said, in a low tone, “Heaven preserve her, who is dearer to me than life!”

Rhodiska hurried away, being no longer able to contain a burst of grief; and Leopold had no sooner lost sight of her, than he went to the gateway, where the horses
and

and his companions were waiting for him. He threw his arms round the neck of the worthy Byloff, whom he called his "dear father;" and then, bidding him adieu, hastily mounted, and rode off with Ludowico and the messenger.

CHAP. III.

AS soon as Leopold and Ludowico arrived at the head-quarters, they were conducted by the messenger to Colonel Zulmandorf, to whom Leopold delivered the Count's letter. The Colonel had no sooner perused it, than he told Leopold, that he should have been inclined to have favoured two youths, of the appearance of himself
and

and his companion, in the pursuit of military glory, even if Count Petrowitz, for whom he had had a friendship of long standing, had not prepossessed him in their favour. Leopold thanked him for the favourable opinion which he had been pleased to entertain of himself and his brother, of which, he said, it would be their chief happiness to prove themselves worthy. The Colonel immediately sent for the serjeant-major of his regiment, to whom he recommended the two youths, and desired him to procure them good quarters, and to superintend, in person, their improvement in the usual manœuvres.

The serjeant-major was inclined to pay the greatest attention to the request of his Colonel, but he found his two pupils so expert in the horse and sword exercise, that he had nothing more to do than to teach them manœuvring with the troop.

In a fortnight after Leopold and Ludowico had joined the regiment, there was to be a grand review by the king in person, preparatory

preparatory to the march of the army. The Colonel was excessively surprised to see these two young men already in the ranks, on so extraordinary an occasion. He watched them narrowly, and his astonishment was increased by the manner in which they acquitted themselves, which was not inferior to the oldest veterans in the regiment. After the review he sent for them, and expressed his pleasure and astonishment at their progress. Leopold modestly answered, that he would cease to wonder at it, when he should know that their father had destined them, from their earliest infancy, for a military life; and, having been himself a veteran, had taken the utmost pains to instruct them in the necessary exercises. The Colonel offered Leopold a cadetcy, which was then at his disposal; but he begged leave to decline it, as he wished not to be separated from his brother, but to fight side by side. The Colonel gave them the greatest encouragement, and dismissed them with assurances
of

of his protection and esteem, if they deserved it. In a short time afterwards, the army marched for the scene of action, which was to be on the frontiers of Poland, into which the enemy had made some irruptions, of no great consequence in themselves, but very harassing to the king's subjects in that neighbourhood.

Nothing occurred, during this campaign, worthy of being related, neither was there any thing interesting in the private adventures of Leopold, whose affections being wholly engaged, he neither made nor encouraged any of those advances to or from the other sex, which are so common in the military profession, and so productive of incidents. As the enemy were rather a marauding party than a regular army, the whole of the campaign passed away in skirmishes, which, although trifling, were extremely harassing, and required the greatest skill and perseverance. Leopold and Ludowico had shewn themselves so vigilant, prompt, and adroit at this petty
kind

kind of warfare, that, under pretence that the service did not require any officer, the Colonel often entrusted them with the command of a small party, with which they always returned, bringing in either prisoners or forage. In the space of about two months, the enemy were so chastised and intimidated by the Polish horse, that not one of them was to be seen on their frontiers, and their own became the scene of that desolation which they had before inflicted on the Polish peasants. They were at length reduced to submission, and to give hostages for their future respect to the Polish territories. During the campaign, the Colonel had frequently repeated the offers of a commission to Leopold; but he had always given the same answer as at first. As he imagined that Leopold only declined it, because he would not step over the head of his companion, he offered them both commissions; but he still received the same answer, with this addition, that there was an affair of infinitely more consequence,

quence, in which, if they had merited his favour, he might be serviceable to them.

“Count Petrowitz has intimated somewhat to me of the circumstances of your birth, to which I presume you allude,” replied the Colonel—“As soon as the regiment goes into quarters, I have the King’s commands to attend him; and if you have any favour to ask, or justice to solicit, prepare your petition, and I will present and back it with all my influence.”

The worthy Colonel strictly adhered to his promise. When the regiment was cantoned, he went to Warsaw, where the court then was, taking Leopold and Ludowico with him; and, on his arrival, was agreeably surprised at receiving the first token of his Majesty’s approbation, which was the commission of Lieutenant-general.

When the General went to the levee to thank the King for this favour, he took the opportunity of presenting Leopold’s petition. It stated the facts of the injustice which he suffered, and prayed the King to
cause

cause justice to be strictly and promptly administered between himself and his powerful competitor. This petition was accompanied by a certificate of General Zulmandorf, of his bravery and good conduct in his regiment, during the late expedition. The King, by a gracious condescension for the worthy General, took the petition into instant consideration, and bade him wait till the levee was over, for an answer. In less than half an hour after it broke up, the King sent for the General into his cabinet, where he delivered him a letter written with his own hand. "Read that letter," said the King—"I believe it will be satisfactory to the young man whom you have taken by the hand, and whom, for that reason, I conceive to be worthy of what I have done." The letter was addressed to his chancery at Cracow, within whose jurisdiction the domains of Rosomaski lay; and directed them to do strict and speedy justice between Leopold and Lanfranco, and to protect the person of the
the

the claimant, and of all those who should give evidence on his side, against any attempts of his competitor.

After the General had expressed his thanks for this additional proof of the King's favour, he returned home, and delivered the letter to Leopold, who was impatient to set out with it to prosecute his claim, as well as to revisit Dorbalec, which contained all his treasure. The General detained him only till he wrote a few lines to Count Petrowitz; and then bidding Leopold apply to him whenever he should think he could be of any service to him, he embraced, and permitted him to depart. Leopold and Ludowico immediately mounted, and pursued the route to Dorbalec, with the utmost pleasure at the thoughts of beholding there those persons who were so dear to them.

When they arrived at Dorbalec, the Count received them with open arms; and after he had perused the General's letter, he again embraced Leopold, saying, that
he

he was rejoiced to learn from the General, that they proved themselves well worthy of his protection and recommendation. "The General," added he, "further informs me, that if you should prove unsuccessful in your claim to the title of Rosomaski, and should be desirous of pursuing a military career, he will use all his interest to procure you a rank suited to your merit."

Although this discourse was highly gratifying to Leopold, yet he was impatient till he heard the name of Rhodiska mentioned, and he at length ventured to express his hopes that she was well.

"Go and satisfy yourself," said the Count — "she would be angry with me, if she knew it, for detaining her friend so long from her: You will find her in the garden, with Dorothea, her constant companion."

Leopold, after having hastily embraced the good old Byloff in the way, flew thither, and perceived them at the bottom of the

garden. He was, as usual, the theme of their discourse at that very instant; and they were so earnestly engaged, that they never perceived him till he was close to them. Rhodiska hearing some one approach, turned about, and instantly exclaimed, "Here he is!" Leopold threw himself on his knees, and saluted her hand with great respect, but with more than usual warmth, as the expectation which he had formed of being reinstated in his proper rank, had removed somewhat of that vast disparity of condition which had before appeared to exist between them.

"Have I then," said Leopold, "had the happiness of engaging any share of the thoughts of the adorable Rhodiska? May I flatter myself that I was the subject of her discourse when I interrupted it?"

"We were certainly talking about you," replied Rhodiska, "and not very much to your advantage. We were saying, that it was a proof how much we enjoyed of your meditations,

meditations, since you could be several months absent without giving us the least tidings of you."

"Charming Rhodiska!" said Leopold—"I only deferred writing to Dorbalec, in the hopes of being the bearer of those tidings in person. Amidst all the confusion of arms, my thoughts have ever been at Dorbalec; and if your portrait could speak, it would inform you how often I have talked to it, and wished that sympathy could convey my words to the lovely original."

"It is a proof of a bad cause, when you are driven to call a dumb witness in your favour," replied Rhodiska—"but you men think, that any excuse will pass upon us credulous women, who are always inclined to forgive: however, as some slight punishment for your neglect, I now impose upon you the task of informing us whatever has happened to you in your absence."

Leopold led her to an arbour, where he gratified her curiosity; and, in return,

made a request to know how she had passed her time?

“ Our lives,” replied Rhodiska, “ have been a constant round of insipid monotony. To prevent a recurrence of the danger from which you rescued me, I have never made any excursion beyond the castle walls; we have, therefore, been confined to the garden: and, to avoid the disagreeable visits of Lanfranco, we have seen very little company.”

“ He has visited you, however, I suppose.”

“ Yes, several times.”

“ And has he not been able to divert you?”

“ No; I know not how it is, but although, when alone, I wished for company, yet Lanfranco no sooner presented himself, than I sighed for solitude; so that it could not be his company I wanted. But now you are come——”

Rhodiska stopped all at once, as if she recollected herself, and looked confused.

Leopold's

Leopold's eyes brightened—he threw himself on his knees, and asked if he might hope that his endeavours to entertain her would be more agreeable?

“ Oh! the company of any one,” replied Rhodiska, “ must be infinitely more agreeable than that of a person who is despised.”

“ I could almost pity Lanfranco for being so unhappy as to be the object of your contempt, which, to myself, would be an insupportable misfortune, and make me weary of existence.”

“ But you are never likely to be put to the trial,” replied Rhodiska, smiling—“ Come, let us now go to my father, who will wish to enjoy your conversation as well as myself.”

They then went to rejoin the Count; and notwithstanding the happiness which Leopold enjoyed with his Rhodiska, yet he acquainted them, that he should set off the next morning for Cracow, to deliver the King's letter, and to commence his suit

against Lanfranco. The Count approved his diligence. It was easy to collect from the looks of Rhodiska, that she was not pleased to lose him again so soon; but when she recollected, that the sooner the cause was ended, the sooner Leopold, if the decision should be in his favour, would be emboldened to declare his passion, which she was certain his honour would never permit him to do otherwise, she joined her father in advising him to lose no time.

At night, when the Count was about to retire, which was early, on account of his infirmities, Leopold took his leave of him, as he had determined to depart very early the next morning. Leopold had then the felicity of being left alone with Rhodiska, but their conversation was not such as to embarrass either. Leopold carefully avoided any thing like the subject of his love: he had resolved, that his success in his cause should either open or seal his lips for ever on that head. As he was about to
take

take his leave of her, she asked how long he might be absent?

“As short a time as possible,” replied Leopold—“I have only to deliver the King’s letter, and engage and instruct my lawyers. My presence will then be no longer necessary at Cracow till the trial—I should imagine two or three days will be sufficient for those purposes.”

“I shall pray for your success,” said Rhodiska.

“So shall I,” said Leopold—“more to prove myself worthy of your esteem, than for the advantages of rank and fortune.”

Very early the next morning, Leopold was on the road to Cracow. As soon as he arrived, he delivered the King’s mandate to the chief judge of the chancery, who told him, that a notification of his claim, and a summons to prepare his defence without loss of time, would be sent off to Lanfranco with all possible expedition; and that, in every respect, the King’s commands would

be obeyed. Leopold then engaged some lawyers, to whom he was recommended, for their ability and integrity, by some friends of Count Petrowitz, who had written to them in Leopold's behalf. Having furnished them with the names of the notary and priest, with whom Byloff's wife had left copies of her deposition, and given them every other necessary information in his power, they advised him to return to Dorbalec, and collect any other evidence which might serve his cause at the trial. They promised that they would give him timely notice of the day appointed for it, that he might come to Cracow with all his witnesses.

The King's commands had been so strictly obeyed, that the notification and summons had reached Lanfranco before Leopold had reached Dorbalec. If this sudden shock could not multiply, yet it rendered horribly furious the malignant passions which stained the breast of Lanfranco. In the first burst of his rage, he
could

could not refrain, even in the presence of the officer who brought the notification and summons, from throwing them on the ground, and trampling them under foot. He called Leopold a cheat and impostor, and gave such alarming symptoms of phrenzy, that every person present hastily withdrew, to avoid the ebullition of his fury. He then threw himself on the ground, and wallowed in his rage.

So stretch'd out, huge in length, the arch fiend lay,
Chain'd on the burning lake ; nor ever thence
Had ris'n, or heav'd his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heav'n,
Left him at large to his own dark designs ;
That, with reiterated crimes, he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others ; and, enrag'd, might see
How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy shewn
On man, by him seduc'd ; but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath, and vengeance pour'd.

MILTON'S *Par. Lost*, b. i. line, 209, &c.

His mind was filled with poison, daggers, and stratagems; and he resolved, at all hazards, to sacrifice those who caused his torment. The first expedients which he hit upon were, to put his competitor out of the way, and to carry off Rhodiska, and compel her to marry him; by effecting which, he imagined he should gain the Count to his party, who would not seek to ruin his son-in-law, by however unworthy means he obtained that title. He summoned Cassimir and Zulasko, two of his most confidential domestics, and the instruments of all his vile purposes, to consult with them on the means of carrying these measures into execution. These were two of the persons who escaped with their lives, when the outrage was offered to Rhodiska in the forest. In order to induce them to make that attempt, Lanfranco had made them great promises; but, under pretence of their having suffered his victim to escape, he had never thought of keeping them. They were dissatisfied, but did not dare

dare to shew it, for fear of falling a sacrifice to his anger, which they knew to be implacable; but they secretly rejoiced when they heard from Lanfranco, that he stood more in need than ever of their services.

Lanfranco acquainted them with what he wished them to perform, and he made them more extensive promises than before, if they would put either Leopold or Rhodiska, or both, into his power, or assassinate the former. After he had ended, Cassimir and Zulasko put on a very serious air, and began to point out insuperable obstacles to the attempt. They stated, that Leopold would undoubtedly be upon his guard; and that as the Count Petrowitz had declared for him, he would order his gates to be shut against all who were averse to him, particularly those who were known to belong to Vistulof. In short, they represented the attempt as impracticable, until Lanfranco, who penetrated their meaning, disposed them to try to surmount all those

E 6

obstacles,

obstacles, by giving them some money as earnest.

After having put these infernal machines in motion, Lanfranco began to devise the means of defending himself before the chancery. As the coffin, which was supposed to contain the corpse of the infant Rosomaski, had been filled with stones only, to prevent any discovery of the imposition by means of a search, he caused some others of his servants to go to Zabno, the nearest village, where, by means of a bribe, they procured the bones of a male infant, who had been interred about eighteen years before. These were carefully deposited within the remains of the mouldering coffin, instead of the stones which were taken out. Two females, either operated upon by the powerful stimulus of gold, or dreading the wrath of Lanfranco, were ready to swear, that Byloff's wife had been delivered of twins, about the same time the Countess Rosomaski was brought
to

to bed ; from whence an inference was to be drawn, that Byloff wished to impose one of his own children in the room of the deceased infant of Count Gustavus. Cassimir and Zulasko were to swear that they put the corpse of that infant, who was the real son of Gustavus, into the coffin, and deposited it in the ground which was the usual burying-place of the family. Having thus settled this artful and imposing defence, he again began to turn all his thoughts to the warding off the blow, before it could be struck, by putting Leopold out of the way. For this reason, he could not rest till he had seen Cassimir and Zulasko leave Vistulof, in disguise, to accomplish it.

More determined than ever in his attempt upon the person of Rhodiska, he had, like Jupiter in his pursuit of Danaë, assailed the walls of Dorbalec with a golden shower. He had bribed one of the Count's domestics, lest any of his own emissaries might be discovered at work on the out-

5 side,

side, to make an aperture from within, through a little unfrequented tower, which stood at one corner of the further end of the garden nearest to the forest. The stones were replaced so loosely, that any one from the outside might enter in a minute; and the aperture was so concealed by the ivy which overspread the outside, and prevented the entrance of the light through the fissures, that it could not have been discovered without a close inspection. So lavish had Lanfranco's agents been of his money on this occasion, that even Dorothea, who had been, for years, rather the friend than the servant of Rhodiska, had yielded to a large bribe, and promised to decoy Rhodiska into this tower, when the emissaries of Lanfranco should be waiting there, in readiness to carry her off. The absence of Leopold presented a proper opportunity of completing this scheme, without much danger of interruption.

As unsuspecting innocence is not a match
for

for wakeful villainy, the unfortunate Rhodiska fell into the treacherous snare laid for her by her ungrateful attendant. She was decoyed by her one evening into the tower, where she was instantly seized by four men, who stopped her mouth, and conveyed her to their horses, which were waiting on the outside. In an instant they put her before one of them, and rode into the forest, with all possible expedition. After Dorothea judged them out of the reach of pursuit, she began to tear and disorder her dress, as though it had been done in her struggles to rescue her mistress, and then ran into the castle to give the alarm. She never stopped her cries and exclamations, till she reached the room where the Count was sitting, in expectation of his daughter's return; and having told her story with all the signs of the deepest distress, she finished it by a pretended swoon.

The Count paid no attention to her, but instantly hastened to the servants' hall, and
in

in almost frantic accents, as he tore his grey hairs from his aged head, he bade them fly to the rescue of his daughter. "Whither must we go?"—"Where shall we enquire for her?"—"Where shall we seek her?" were the instant cries of the domestics, whom Dorothea had not stopped to acquaint with the particulars—"The tower in the garden" was all that the Count could utter; and having pronounced these words, he dropped down senseless.

CHAP. IV.

AT the very crisis of this confusion, Leopold returned from Cracow, and entered the hall. When he perceived the Count lying motionless on the floor, and all the domestics flying different ways in disorder, he drew one of his pistols from his belt, and threatened the first who stirred with instant death. Dorothea, who had thought proper to come to herself, and that instant entered the hall, exclaimed, "Oh, my mistress! my dear mistress!"

"What of her?" demanded Leopold.

"Gone, gone! irrecoverably lost!"

"How? When?"

"Carried

“Carried off!”

“This instant tell me in what manner.”

Dorothea related all the particulars, and Leopold, having recommended the Count to the care of the females, bade all the male domestics to fly and scour the forest. He himself instantly mounted his jaded horse, and guessing Lanfranco to have been the author of this plot, he rode as fast as possible to the skirt of the forest which overlooked the Castle of Vistulof. Here he alighted to give his horse rest, and to watch all who approached it. The remainder of the day, however, wore away without his seeing a single person approach or leave the castle; but as Leopold imagined they would take a circuit to avoid pursuit, and bring in their prey at night, he determined to remain at his post.

The sun was now at the antipodes, and his pale sister ruled the night with uncommon splendour. Silence reigned, except where the almost expiring breezes shook the foliage of the trees; and sleep had scattered

tered her drowsy poppies over all but the lurking assassin, the care or woe-worn wretch, and the beasts of prey—in plain English, it was midnight, when Leopold discerned the shadow of a man, who came from the castle directly towards him. He lay perfectly motionless till he saw him within his grasp, and then starting up, he seized him with one hand, whilst his other brandished his threatening sabre. The man instantly dropped on his knees, and begged him to spare his life.

“Your life is in no danger,” replied Leopold, “if you instantly answer me truly, such questions as I shall demand. First, who are you? and what brings you out at this unreasonable hour?”

“I am one of Count Rosomaski’s domestics,” replied the trembling wretch.

“Well, and your business?”

“That is my master’s, who has ordered me to divulge it to no one. A servant may not, you know, disobey the commands of his master.”

“True,”

“ True,” cried Leopold, “ and I am your lawful master : I am the true Count Rosomaski.”

“ You cannot be my master, however, till the law has established your claim.”

“ My claim has nothing to do with what I want to know of you. The daughter of Count Petrowitz has been carried off, this afternoon, by some villains, and I suspect that you know something of the matter. Therefore I shall carry you before the magistrates, who will make you give an account of yourself, and your midnight rambles.”

“ You will gain nothing by that,” replied the man—“ Harsh means mostly prevent the effect which they are intended to produce.”

“ The choice betwixt harsh or gentle means lies with yourself,” said Leopold.

“ The late Count Gustavus was a generous master,” said the man, after some hesitation ; “ and if you are his son, I suppose you are no less so.”

“ Those

“Those who do me a service,” said Leopold, “shall not have to reproach me with ingratitude. But as we are strangers to each other, perhaps you think pay better than promises—there’s money for you.”

“This is, indeed, acting like the son of Count Gustavus, and I am sure, neither the domestics nor tenants of Vistulof, will have any occasion to be sorry if you should meet with success. We are treated like slaves, and the tenants groan under the most oppressive exactions, besides the insults which such of their wives and daughters as are handsome are compelled to submit to. Any change must be for the better, as our condition cannot be worse.”

“Well,” said Leopold, “if I gain the day, it will be a happy one for you all—but come to the point.”

“If I tell you where the lady is, you cannot recover her without assistance, and I am afraid you will not have time to get it.”

“How so?”

“She

“ She is to be removed, at midnight, to a place of greater security than where she now is. I was going to be one of the escort, but as you have detained me, they may probably have been tired of waiting, and gone off without me.”

“ How many, besides yourself, are those who were to form the escort ? ”

“ Only three. Lanfranco would not let any more into the secret than those who were engaged in carrying her off.”

“ You were one of them then ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Does not your conscience accuse you with the baseness of the action ? ”

“ Conscience, as you call it, would have been instant death. If we had but hesitated after Lanfranco confided to us his design, he would have rendered us corpses ere now.”

“ Are you sure there are no more than three guards over the lady ? ”

“ Perfectly sure.”

“ Then lead towards the place,” said Leopold ;

pold ; “ and remember, that if I discover the least treachery, thy life shall instantly pay the forfeit.”

Leaving his horse, Leopold followed the man through a considerable part of the forest, until they reached the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, which they skirted, and at length entered into a defilé. The guide stopped at a place where a large mass of rock overhung their path, and seemed to threaten instant destruction : beneath it grew some thick bushes.

“ We are now,” said the guide, “ arrived at the entrance of the subterraneous cavern to which the lady was conveyed. There is a long dark passage to pass before you will arrive at the cavern ; and if the guards have not removed her, you will have to encounter them. I have now given you,” added he, “ all the information in my power, and it is for you to determine in what manner you will proceed.”

Leopold then first began to reflect upon himself, for having come upon such an
errand

errand alone. If he had overtaken the ravishers with their prey, it would have been a most desperate undertaking to have attacked them; and the horrors of Rhodiska would have been, perhaps, augmented, by seeing him fall beneath the weapons of his numerous adversaries. He considered, that if he entrusted Lanfranco's domestic to go to Dorbalec, and get him assistance, he would, in all probability, return to Vistulof, and sally out with his comrades to destroy him. He once thought of sending him in to the cavern, to bring him intelligence whether Rhodiska was still there or not; but again he dreaded, that they might escape with her by some other outlet, or, at least, that his emissary would alarm the guards, and join them in attacking him. There appeared only two courses to be pursued; the one was, to wait at the entrance till the guards should make their appearance; the other was, to venture into the subterranean: the former would subject him to less danger from treachery; and he remained

mained where he was nearly an hour. He then began to grow impatient, and determined to proceed to the cavern at all hazards. Having bound the domestic's hands behind him, to prevent any treacherous blow in the dark, he held him with one hand, and then removing the bushes, they penetrated the dreary gulph. They pursued this dismal route during the space of several minutes, when the domestic informed Leopold, that he had better feel before him as he proceeded, as they must soon arrive at the end of the passage. Leopold held out his sabre, and in a short time found an obstacle present itself; it was the solid rock, which seemed to bar all further progress; but the guide told him, that if he went a little to the left, he would find a flight of steps, which they must ascend. It was as he said: they mounted the steps, and, at the top, came to a strong door. It was not fastened; and, on Leopold's pushing it, he felt it give way, and perceived, at a distance,

the faint glimmering of a lamp. The guide then assured him, that his comrades were still there, or the lamp would have been extinguished. Leopold's heart now panted for action: he let go the door, which instantly closed with a loud report, and the echoes rung through the vaults, till they died away apparently at a great distance. Leopold suspected treachery—his sabre was uplifted to strike his guide; but he averted the blow, by telling Leopold, that it would not alarm the guards, who expected his coming, and would not dream of his bringing company. He also assured Leopold, that, if he mastered the guards, he could easily open the door with the assistance of the lamp. As a man of true valour never wishes to spill blood but in cases of necessity, Leopold was satisfied with this assurance, and with the precaution which he had taken, of preventing his guide from doing him any harm. He had advanced some paces towards the lamp, when he was seized from behind: his treacherous guide
was

was separated from him; and, in spite of all his struggles, his sabre was wrested from him, and his hands confined. He was then forced to the place where the lamp was burning, by the light of which he perceived himself in a spacious vault. He was put into irons, which were fastened to a ring-bolt in the ground; and having thus secured him, the treacherous guide and his comrades all went away.

Leopold's breast was swollen with rage and indignation: he did not doubt that Rhodiska, as well as himself, were in Lanfranco's power, and that they had every thing to dread from his cruelty and violence. His suspicions were not unfounded. We have already seen by what means Lanfranco had gotten Rhodiska into his power. Leopold also owed his unhappy situation to his treachery. Lanfranco had given orders to Cassimir, when his associates should have carried off Rhodiska, to watch round Derbaléc, and, if there should be any immediate pursuit, to discover himself; and,

by taking a contrary direction, to mislead the pursuers. For this purpose, he was mounted on one of the fleetest horses. Cassimir remained at the edge of the forest so long without seeing any thing like a pursuit, that he imagined his associates had arrived at their place of destination with Rhodiska. He was about to return with the intelligence to Lanfranco, when he beheld Leopold leave Dorbaiec, and ride towards Vistulof. Cassimir readily guessed his intentions, and conceived the idea of trepanning him, as he was unattended by a single person. As his horse was fresher than Leopold's, he galloped at full speed to Vistulof, to consult Lanfranco, and entered the castle some minutes before Leopold arrived in sight of it. Lanfranco immediately ordered several of his domestics to watch, and give him notice the instant any one came in sight. It was not long before he was informed, that a horseman had appeared on the edge of the forest, where he had alighted, and was then seated
at

at the foot of a tree. Cassimir went to reconnoitre, and declared that the person was Leopold.

Lanfranco at first entertained the design of causing some of his domestics, well mounted and armed, to go out of the castle on the opposite side, where they could not be perceived by Leopold, and to endeavour to cut off his retreat; but Cassimir represented, that Leopold's being alone might be only a feint, and probably he would, on the first appearance of a pursuit, retire to a strong party of Count Petrowitz's adherents, which might be placed in ambush, and, instead of surprising him, all Lanfranco's party might be cut off. At length Lanfranco hit upon the expedient to ensnare Leopold, which too fatally succeeded. Cassimir was ordered to throw himself in his way, as if through chance, and inveigle him to the subterranean, where every thing was prepared for his reception.

Cassimir and his associates had not long left Leopold, before he was roused from the state of stupefaction into which his misfortune had plunged him, by some distant sounds which approached him. "It is all over," exclaimed he—"the treacherous villains have informed my mortal enemy of their success, and are now bringing him to triumph over me, and to plant the dagger in my breast—Heaven protect my Rhodiska!" He at length discerned several flambeaux, and, by their light, he distinguished persons bearing something like a coffin, and one who preceded them, carrying a basket. As they approached nearer, Leopold discovered that the latter person was Lanfranco.

"Is it possible," said Leopold, "that one who claims to be of the noble blood of the Rosemaski, can be coward enough to distrust his own arm, and to attack his enemy as an assassin?"

"What hast thou, vile peasant! to do
with

with the blood of Rosomaski?" replied Lanfranco. Then turning to the domestics, he bade them put down their load.

The domestics approached Leopold, and placed near him a coffin, painted black, on the lid of which was the following inscription—

" Leopold Byloff,
The pretended Count Rosomaski;
A notorious cheat
and
Impostor,
Died here."

" There," cried Lanfranco, pointing to the inscription, " you may read your destiny and your epitaph."

" If thou art really a Rosomaski," said Leopold, " thou wilt not suffer one of the same name and blood to perish like a malefactor. Restore me my sabre, and then do thou and thy attendants attack me. Nay, if thou art afraid there will not be enough,

send for all thy host of myrmidons, and I will prove myself a true Rosomaski !”

Lanfranco bade the attendants remove the lid of the coffin ; they did so, and Leopold beheld only a small quantity of straw, which covered the bottom. He now expected the fatal blow. “ Here,” said he to the attendants, “ I bare my bosom to your daggers. I do not attribute my death to you, but to the cowardly assassin, your master : his is the hand which directs your weapons. Only bear witness that I die like a Rosomaski. I die in peace, since I am assured that the brave Ludowico, my friend, will never rest till he has revenged my death, by striking his own dagger into the heart of my murderer !”

The attendants appeared astonished at the undaunted firmness with which he uttered this discourse. Lanfranco evidently trembled at the latter part of it : he was not unacquainted with the daring soul of Ludowico ; and the uplifted dagger, with
which

which Leopold had threatened him, seemed already to play before his disturbed imagination. Leopold beheld his confusion, and smiled.

“What is there,” said he, “in the name of Ludowico, that should make Lanfranco tremble, as if an ague-fit shook him?”

“Thou wilt perhaps see him in the course of the few days which I shall permit thee to live,” replied Lanfranco. “As you have been companions in life, you will then be so in death, and I shall smile at that vengeance in which thou seemest to hug thyself. When I have gained my law-suit, Leopold and Ludowico shall die. To increase thy present torment, I will tell thee that Rhodiska is mine.”

“’Tis false!” cried Leopold—“thine she never will be!”

“That, or death,” replied Lanfranco, will be her only alternative; but I have no more time to waste in words. That coffin will serve thee for a seat by day, and a couch at night, till it incloses thee for

ever. This basket contains bread and water, which will serve to prolong thy miserable existence, until, glutted with revenge, I give thee the *coup de grace*."

Lanfranco then put down the basket, and retired with all his attendants. He shut himself up in his chamber, not to seek repose, for that fled from him, but to contrive new schemes. He had guarded, as he imagined, against all possibility of Rhodiska and Leopold's being discovered by their friends; for although the cavern, in which they were confined, communicated with the subterraneous vaults of Vistulof, yet the communication was so artfully concealed, that he dreaded not the strictest search. In order to be completely secure, he thought that there only remained to get Byloff and his son into his power, to prevent the former from giving his evidence on the trial, and the latter from revenging his friend.

CHAP. V.

WHILST Lanfranco was thus employed, the inhabitants of Dorbalec were suffering under the effects of his treachery. Count Petrowitz no sooner recovered his senses, than those around him dreaded a relapse. They endeavoured to compose him, by telling him that Leopold had arrived during his insensibility, and had instantly left the castle with the greatest part of the domestics, in search of his daughter. This intelligence had somewhat of the desired effect. Ludowico, who was absent when the alarm was given, and did not return till Leopold had left the castle, immediately mounted

one of the Count's best horses, and rode to all the neighbouring villages, to give notice of the transaction, and desire that the ravishers might be stopped, if they attempted to pass that way. Byloff remained with the Count, to console him. Ludowico did not return, till very late at night. When he was informed that Leopold was not come back, he entertained no apprehensions for his safety; but, on the contrary, expressed his hopes, that he had gained some intelligence of the route of the ravishers, and was in full pursuit of them. He went to bed, perfectly easy on his account, to refresh himself, and prepare to go in search of him the next morning. Byloff sat by the Count's bedside during the whole of the night. In the morning, very little after day-break, they were alarmed by intelligence which was brought them, that Leopold's horse was at the drawbridge, without its rider.

The Count, Byloff, and Ludowico, were now assailed with the most gloomy presage.

They

They conjectured that he had been either assassinated, or trepanned, into the power of his enemy. Leopold's horse and furniture were examined, but not the least marks of blood or violence appeared upon either. Ludowico expressed his resolution of going post to Crauw, to demand the interference of the chancery and the police; and he had no sooner left the castle, than Byloff, and a number of the Count's domestics, went into the forest, where they separated, to traverse it in different directions, and endeavour to find some traces of Leopold. At night the domestics returned, without having discovered the least vestiges either of Rhodiska or Leopold. Neither Byloff, nor his son, came back that night, which the Count passed in the utmost agitation, of alternate hope and despair.

Lanfranco, who had risen with the sun on that morning, instantly dispatched Cassimir and Zulasko to endeavour to waylay Byloff and Ludowico, and to trepan, or
assassinate

assassinate them. Having seen them depart, he began to draw up his defence, to be given in to the chancery. He insisted, that he was the only son of the brother, and heir-at-law, of Count Gustavus Rosomaski, who had died, leaving no issue besides a son, who survived his father only a few weeks, and was interred in the family-vault at Vistulof. He asserted, that Byloff's wife had been delivered of twins, with whom she and her husband fled, carrying away a considerable property belonging to his father, which had been entrusted to their care by Count Gustavus Rosomaski, in his lifetime; and that, notwithstanding every pursuit was made by his father, to discover the place of their retreat, and make them restore the stolen property, they had never been heard of till within a few weeks; when, finding his father dead, Byloff had come forward, and attempted to impose one of his own children upon the world, as the infant son of Count Gustavus, whom he should prove to have died.

He

He expressed his hopes, that the decree of the honourable chancery of Cracow, in his favour, would soon remove all the aspersions which had been attempted to be thrown on the memory of his late father. To sum up the whole, he ventured to add his belief, that the claim was fabricated, with a view to impose upon Count Petrowitz, whose daughter and the pretended Count Rosomaski had disappeared together.

With this artful defence, he dispatched a messenger to Cracow, who also carried his instructions to his lawyers, to press that a speedy day might be appointed for the trial. As the lawyers employed by Leopold had received similar instructions from him, and were ignorant of the misfortune which had befallen him, they concurred in the application; and that day week was appointed for the trial, of which notice was instantly sent to Vistulof and Dorbalec.

Count Petrowitz had no sooner received this notice, than he was impatient at the
absence

absence of Byloff and Ludowico. He, at times, entertained apprehensions that they also had fallen into some snare, which had been laid for them by the vengeful and crafty Lanfranco. Messengers were dispatched every where, to search for them; but another night elapsed, without bringing any tidings of either of them.

Leopold had passed this gloomy interval in alternate paroxysms of rage and despair. He would have borne his own misfortune with manly fortitude, if the idea of Rhodiska's being a partaker of it, had not overcome him. He was seated on his coffin, revolving on the insults to which he supposed her exposed, when he was roused by the sound of approaching footsteps. He beheld Lanfranco, who brought him, as usual, his scanty pittance of bread and water.

"Behold," said the taunting coward, "the only scanty pittance of the good things of Vistulof, which thou mayst ever hope to receive!"

Leopold

Leopold eyed him with a look of sovereign contempt, but made not the least reply.

“Is this,” added Lanfranco, “the would-be Count Rosomaski?—He looks more like a malefactor.”

“Insolent villain!” exclaimed Leopold—“How wilt thou look when Ludowico shall justly reproach thee with thy crimes, previously to plunging the avenging dagger into thy heart, and sending thy black soul to its kindred darkness?”

These words had a greater effect upon Lanfranco than even Leopold could have imagined. Lanfranco, who had passed the two nights before the preceding one, in ruminating on future schemes of vengeance, had yielded to sleep, on the last night, only through fatigue, and then he had better not have slept. A frightful vision harrowed up his soul, which had not yet recovered from the horrible impression which Leopold's words renewed in all its force. He dreamed that the ground opened
beneath

beneath his feet, and belched out the most pestilential exhalations and devouring flames. As he fled, the earth still gave way, and similar chasms opened ready to ingulph him. One only way appeared to favour his flight—He pursued it, but was instantly stopped by Ludowico, with a dagger in his hand, and rage sparkling in his eyes. He heard the voice of Ludowico exclaiming, “Behold the victim due to friendship and to justice!” Lanfranco threw himself at his feet, and tried every method to avoid his impending fate; but Ludowico only smiled at his pangs. “It is thus,” cried Ludowico, “that you smiled when about to pierce the bosom of my beloved friend Leopold. Thy present anguish is delightful. Look down, thou spotless spirit of my departed friend! and behold how I revenge thy death, by ridding the world of this monster, and sending his soul to those eternal tortures which await it!” He raised his arm to strike the fatal blow, when the struggles and inward convulsions

vulsions of Lanfranco, released him from the bonds of sleep. Some minutes elapsed before he could persuade himself that it was only a dream. He then uttered the most piercing cries, and presently drew some of the domestics around him. They found him pale, almost lifeless, and covered with the cold dew of fear. He bade them search his apartment, and all the adjoining ones, to see if they could find no person concealed. The search was fruitless, and his fears began to subside; but he would not subject himself to a repetition of the vision, and detained some of the servants in conversation, till daybreak.

The words of Leopold again brought the horrid spectre before his imagination. He breathed hard—he was agitated, and trembled. Leopold knew not the cause of his agitation, but he enjoyed it: he beheld him as triumphantly as if he had had him prostrate at his feet; but neither of them uttered a word. This pause of silence was at last interrupted by a noise, which appeared

peared to proceed from the door which had closed upon Leopold when he entered these horrid caverns. It ceased for a moment, and then recommenced with increased violence, as if some persons, from without, were breaking it open with axes.

“Dost thou not hear those sounds?” said Leopold—“They proceed from the arm of Ludowico, which is now forcing the gate of my prison, to give me liberty and thee death!”

“It is not too late to prevent that,” cried Lanfranco, drawing his sword—“If it be Ludowico, he shall only carry thy corpse hence.” He ran towards Leopold, who, by a sudden impulse, seized the lid of the coffin, on which he was sitting, and struck Lanfranco so violent a blow on the breast, before he could reach his own with his sword, that he reeled back several paces, and dropped the weapon. Leopold endeavoured to follow up his blow, but his chains would not permit him to reach so far. At that instant, they heard the door give way,
and

and a confusion of voices ensued. Lanfranco fled, with all possible speed, in an opposite direction. He had scarcely disappeared, before Leopold heard the voice of Ludowico exclaiming, "Here he is! and, thanks to the Almighty! alive." He saw him rush forwards, and, in an instant, held him in his embrace; but, suddenly releasing himself, he exclaimed, "My friend! my brother! my deliverer! lose no time with me, but seek Rhodiska, who is somewhere in these abodes." Ludowico ordered some of the party to follow him, and proceeded in his search after the unfortunate maiden. Byloff, who had attended the party, but was in the rear, now advanced, and clasped Leopold in his arms—"My dear son! my dear master!" cried Byloff—"Providence only could have restored thee to us!" Leopold's heart was too big for utterance—he appeared stupefied with surprise, but was soon roused, by hearing Ludowico exclaim, "She is found! she will be here presently!" Leopold then
gave

gave way to the most frantic excess, and danced about in his fetters; so that they could hardly persuade him to stand still, whilst he was released from them. This task was scarcely completed, before they beheld the rest of the party approaching, with Rhodiska in the midst of them. Leopold broke through all who stood in his way, and was at her feet in an instant. Rhodiska was so overpowered with her emotions, that she could not speak; and Ludowico intreated Leopold to withdraw from her sight, till she could behold him with more composure. Leopold complied with this seasonable advice; and, leaving Rhodiska to the care of his friend, he returned to Byloff, with whom he left the cavern, and once more beheld the open air, which, only some few minutes before, he despaired of ever seeing again. A number of horses, belonging to the party, were waiting for them; and as soon as Ludowico brought forwards Rhodiska, they prepared to convey her back to Dorbalec. Amongst
the

the party, were a magistrate and several of the police-officers of Cracow; the former had a chaise, in which he politely offered Rhodiska a seat. They only waited the arrival of the rest of the party, who were exploring the subterraneous cavern; but, to the extreme surprise of Leopold, they declared, when they left it, that, after a most strict search, they could discover no one who was not of their party, except Rhodiska and Leopold; neither could they find any other outlet than the entrance by which they arrived at it. They; however, brought away the coffin, the sword which had been dropped by Lanfranco, and every thing they could find. The whole party then set forward for Dorbalec, whither Leopold and Ludowico had pushed on before, to break the joyful news to the Count. They found him lying on his bed, with his eyes closed: as they approached, he opened them; and no sooner cast them on Leopold, than he exclaimed, "Do you bring me any tidings of my dear Rhodiska?"

Leopold, who saw his situation, did not think it prudent to give him any violent sensation; but, assuming a cheerful air, he answered, that there were more than hopes that he would see her before another day elapsed. The Count only shook his head at this reply, which he looked upon as a kind of pious fraud, to disguise from him the full extent of his misfortune. Leopold took one of his hands, and, grasping it within his own, assured him, that he himself had an implicit confidence in what he had just told him, and that he had not the least doubt but that his daughter was, at that very moment, safe in the hands of the police-officers of Cracow, who had, by some means, discovered the author of the outrage, and gone to search the place where they had heard she was concealed. The Count appeared more composed after this assurance, and said he should die satisfied if he could behold her once again. At that instant, their ears were assailed with the loudest acclamations, and the
Count,

Count, feebly raising his head, appeared to wish and yet to dread to ask the cause of it. Presently they heard the trampling of horses, and the acclamations grew louder and more distinct. The Count looked in Leopold's face.

"I should not be surprised," said Leopold, "if even now your daughter was safe within these walls."

The Count, unable to restrain his impatience any longer, desired that some one might be sent to learn the cause of these acclamations. Leopold turned to Ludowico, who understood his looks, and left the chamber. In a few moments he returned, and informed the Count, that the acclamations were those of his domestics, who had been overjoyed by the arrival of some horsemen, to inform him that his daughter was safe, and on the road to Dorbalec: she might be expected to arrive in less than a quarter of an hour. The Count reclined his head, and appeared employed in a silent ejaculation to Heaven, in which

no one would interrupt him. Rhodiska was actually arrived, but Ludowico had prevailed upon her to restrain her impatience of seeing her father, till he should be made acquainted with her arrival, by degrees. Ludowico at length received another look from Leopold, and he again left the room. In order to prepare the Count, Ludowico ordered the domestics to give another shout, and then returning, he informed the Count that his daughter was arrived, and he had seen her alight from the chaise which had brought her, and which he knew to belong to one of the magistrates of Cracow. Presently the door opened, and Rhodiska entered: she flew to her father, and caught him in her arms; but, through an excess of joy at seeing him again, and grief at beholding the havoc which her misfortune had caused in his countenance, she uttered only sobs and sighs. At length she began to speak, but inarticulately.—“Compose yourself, my dear Rhodiska!” said the Count—“I shall be happy, since I behold

behold you again." Leopold, who dreaded the effect which the grief of Rhodiska might have upon her father, at length thought proper to try to remove her. He represented to her, that the Count stood in need of repose after such an unexpected burst of joy, and that the magistrate was waiting to take down, from the mouths of those concerned, whatever they could inform him of the affair, that the author of it might be brought to punishment. The Count joined in desiring her not to detain the worthy magistrate, who would, in all probability, wish to return as soon as possible to Cracow. Rhodiska was, with difficulty, prevailed upon to leave her father; and she accompanied Leopold to the room where the magistrate was employed in taking the depositions, and where they gave in their own. When this business was finished, the Count sent to desire that the magistrate would favour him with his company. The Count thanked him in the warmest terms, for the deliverance of

his daughter, and requested to be informed how they had discovered the place of her confinement? The magistrate replied, that Byloff, through whose means it had been effected, was the only person to give him that information. He added, that he had only done his duty, in searching the place where she was suspected to be concealed. The Count again thanked him for the happy dispatch with which he had executed his office, and desired his acceptance of a valuable ring which he took from his finger, as a token of his esteem and gratitude. He also presented him with a purse, which he begged him to do him the favour to distribute as he should think proper, among those who had attended him. The magistrate had no sooner retired, than the Count desired that Byloff might be sent for, to acquaint them with the manner in which he had made the happy discovery. Byloff soon arrived, and gave them the following wonderful account.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

“THE morning on which we were alarmed at the return of Leopold’s horse without its rider, I set off, determined to trace the whole adjoining country, to discover what had become of him. I wandered about the whole day, without having met with a single person. The declining sun had begun to paint objects of a deep-red colour, and I thought of seeking some path which would conduct me to a habitation, where I might pass the night. I guessed I must be at a considerable distance from Dorbalec, when I beheld a long avenue, pierced through the forest in a straight line, where the

underwood had been cleared to form a passage between the gigantic trees, which formed an arch over head. At the further extremity, I perceived a bright light through the gloom of this umbrageous vault, which was caused by the reflection of the sun-beams from a beautiful cascade. My curiosity was awakened—I hastened my steps; and, when I arrived at the extremity of the avenue, I beheld the remains of an old castle. The sheet of water, with which it appeared surrounded, had penetrated through the foundations, and made its way into the interior. The source of this reservoir, being no longer confined by the bars which art had formerly opposed to keep it within proper bounds, had flown in greater abundance; and having entered the castle, where the waters were confined by thick walls, had risen to the height of the lowest windows, whence they issued out again in torrents of foam.

“ I was admiring, in silence, this wonderful combination of nature and art, when
I was.

I was surprised to hear the voice of a human being, whose approach the noise of these cascades had prevented me from perceiving, till he was at my side. On turning round, I beheld a venerable figure, with a long beard. Curiosity only made me attentively examine his face, of which I had not the least recollection; but, after examining mine with equal attention, I started to hear him call me by my name. I again endeavoured to recollect him, but in vain; and, at length, desired an explanation.

‘It is no wonder,’ said he, ‘that you should not know the woe-worn Irvan in this disguise, and after so long an absence. I knew you, however, at some distance, and could not help imagining I beheld your phantom, since all your acquaintance have long supposed you dead.’

“If the hermit was surprised at beholding me, I was no less at seeing, in that condition, one of the tenants of Vistulof, whom, in the days of Count Gustavus, I

had oftentimes beheld in ease, happiness, and prosperity. I expressed my surprise in turn, and desired to know the cause of his quitting the world for solitude.

‘Come with me,’ said he, ‘to my habitation, and I will readily acquaint you with it. It is some relief to the afflicted, to disburthen themselves of that never-ending worm which gnaws and consumes them.’

“He then led me round the basin, till we came to a small isthmus, or neck of land, which joined the ruins to the forest, and afforded a kind of causeway to it. We walked over this to the peninsula, where, in the ruins of what appeared to have been formerly a chapel, and which, by being in an elevated station, had escaped the surrounding element, he had taken up his residence. Some dried moss and leaves, heaped up in one corner, served him to repose his head; and the rest of the furniture, except an axe, a fishing-net, a kettle, and some other trifling utensils, were equally simple. A stone served him for a
seat;

seat; and he left me a few minutes, to roll in another for his unexpected guest.—Having raked up the expiring embers, and thrown on them some fresh fuel, he produced some fish, of which he said the pond contained vast quantities, and put them into the kettle over the fire.

‘Now we shall lose no time,’ said Irvan, ‘as supper will be getting ready, whilst I relate my sad story. You once knew me contented, happy, and gay—you now behold me sinking under a load of grief, and flying, like a wild beast, from the haunts of man: such are the vicissitudes of human life!—But to my story: You have seen my daughter Zerbetta?’

‘Yes, frequently,’ replied I—‘she was said to be handsome, and I thought that report did not exaggerate her beauty; but she was then almost too young to form a judgment of her.’

‘Curses on her beauty!’ exclaimed the old man, ‘that was our ruin.’

“The tears began to trickle down his sil-

very beard—he paused awhile, but I would not break silence, lest I might again unthinkingly wound him. At length he grew more composed, and continued thus :

‘ You well know, that, in the days of our good Count Gustavus, we were safe in our property and honour. After his death, you soon disappeared ; and although we thought your conduct strange at first, yet, in a very little time, we began to give you the credit of foreseeing the storm that hung over our heads. We groaned under the most oppressive exactions ; but that was the least misfortune of those who happened to have handsome wives or daughters. All domestic felicity was destroyed by the lawless Theodoric. For years I endeavoured to conceal my Zerbetta, and never permitted her, on any occasion, to go to the castle ; but my precaution was vain—I only escaped Scylla to run upon Charybdis. Lanfranco, his son, when he arrived at the age of manhood, even exceeded his father in vice, and seemed to
place

place all his delight in doing us some mischief. If we ventured to complain of it to Theodoric, he laughed at us, and Lanfranco was sure to be revenged.

‘ One hapless day, either being, or pretending to be fatigued with the chase, he stopped at my cottage when I was absent, and demanded some refreshment. My daughter, without knowing who he was, gave him whatever we had, and was unfortunate enough to appear, in his eyes, worthy of conquest. At my return, I asked for my supper, but it was all gone, and my daughter acquainted me with the occasion of it. I told her, she had acted just as I should have done if I had been at home; and, having taken a slight repast of bread and milk, retired to rest, without imagining that this adventure would have any further consequences. The next day Lanfranco called again, and either timed his visits so well, or had watched my going out, that he was several hours alone with

her. By what means he had prevailed upon Zerbetta to connive at his visits, and to conceal them from me, I know not; but he continued to visit her daily for a long time, without my having the least suspicion of it. One day, however, I was taken ill, and was obliged to quit my labour. As I entered my cottage, I was astonished to behold our young lord, as I instantly knew him to be, seated by my daughter, with one arm round her waist, and looking at her as she was at work. Zerbetta was covered with confusion, and so was Lanfranco; but he soon resumed his usual effrontery—took me by the hand—blamed me for concealing such a treasure as my daughter from the eyes of the world; and added, how much he was obliged to chance for having discovered it to him. I was too much displeased to stand upon any kind of ceremony, and I instantly bade Zerbetta, with a stern voice and look, to leave the room, and to know, in future, that the
son

son of Count Rosomaski was not a proper companion for the daughter of Irvan, the peasant.'

'Why not?' demanded he.

'Your youth and inexperience may excuse such a question,' replied I; 'but if you had lived longer in the world, you would have been sensible of the difference of your rank and hers.'

'Something is due to my rank,' said he, 'and something to her beauty. She has enslaved me—Permit me to continue my visits, which will be unknown to all the rest of the world, and I will make you the richest tenant of Vistulof.'

'I am sorry,' said I, regarding him with the utmost contempt, 'to find that a person in your elevated station, can lessen himself so far as to appear contemptible in the eyes of a man of my lowly rank. Do you feel no shame at proposing to a father to consent to his daughter's infamy, and to pamper himself with the fruits of it? Learn that there are as many poor men with honour,

nour, as there are rich ones without it : henceforth, know yourself and me better. Do not seek to destroy the respect I have for you, as the son of my lord ; for, if you seek to wound my honour, I shall consider myself as your superior, and act accordingly.’

‘ Having said this, I left him, and went in search of my daughter, whom I would not suffer out of my sight any more, until I saw him depart. Notwithstanding the close watch which I kept during several following weeks, I never once saw him make his appearance, nor any one who had the suspicious look of a clandestine messenger on those occasions. I then concluded, that what I had said to him had made a proper impression : I began to lose my suspicions, and to go to my labour as usual—Fatal security !

‘ One evening I returned, and found the cottage deserted—I flew round the neighbourhood, and sought Zerbetta every where, but in vain—Night came, but no Zerbetta.—

Zerbetta—I wandered about the forest the greater part of it; and, in the morning, took the resolution of going to Vistulof, throwing myself at the feet of Theodoric, and imploring him, as a parent himself, to pity the anguish of a distressed father, and to cause Lanfranco to restore me my daughter. I did so, and Theodoric laughed at me. He had the insolence to tell me, that he neither knew nor cared any thing about my daughter; but if she was under the protection of his son, it was an honour, instead of a disgrace, to a peasant like myself. Stung to madness with insult added to injury, I forgot the vassal, and talked as one man should talk to another on such an occasion. Theodoric was enraged, and ordered the domestics to thrust me out of the castle, and never to admit me again. I still persisted in endeavouring to find my lost sheep, but my search was fruitless. My house grew hateful to me, and I quitted it, to wander about the forest. In my rambles, I discovered this retreat; and, as

3. it

it had no inhabitant, appropriated it to myself. Here, the screeching of the owl, the flitting of the bat, and the croaking of the raven, are pleasing to me in this solitude. Like those streamlets which gush out of the crevices of the rocks, and, after having dashed over the precipices with foaming restlessness, mingle themselves with the peaceful waters of the lake, my latter end would be peaceful, if the thoughts of my unhappy Zerbetta, of whose fate I am still ignorant, did not embitter them. Only last night, I met with an extraordinary adventure, which renewed my fears for her, and still fills my soul with terror. Ah! if that hapless female should have been Zerbetta!’

‘What adventure! what hapless female!’ exclaimed I, starting up.

‘Resume your seat, and you shall hear,’ replied Irvan—‘As I sleep but little, I generally wander when the nights are fine, and meditate, as I behold the globes of night sparkling in the studded expanse, on
the

the glory of their artificer. Last night was uncommonly beautiful. I was walking in a glen which divides two chains of these extensive mountains, when I was surprised at the sounds of some horsemen. Judging they might be some of those banditti who infest these parts, I quitted the glen, and ascending the hill on one side, I sat down behind some thick bushes, where I thought they would pass by without perceiving me. To my surprise, when they arrived opposite to the spot where I sat, I could perceive, by their voices, they had also stopped. As I was in an elevated situation, I ventured to look down into the glen, and beheld four men, who had dismounted from their horses, and bore in their arms the appearance of a female, but whether lifeless or not, I could not determine. They approached a spot covered with bushes, and overhung by a huge mass of rock. They removed the bushes, and instantly disappeared, leaving one man to take

take care of the horses. In less than half an hour, the three men, who had entered the cave, returned without the female, and remounting their horses, they all rode off. I was, for some time after their departure, fixed to the spot with surprise and horror. ‘Who knows,’ exclaimed I, ‘but that hapless female may be Zerbetta!’

‘No—it must have been Rhodiska!’ said I, again starting up.

‘Who?’ said Irvan.

‘Rhodiska, the daughter of Count Petrowitz, who was carried off from her father’s house, on the evening before, by some villains. Should you be able to find the spot again?’

‘Yes, readily,’ replied Irvan.

‘Then you must accompany me to-morrow morning to Cracow,’ said I, ‘to give intelligence of this extraordinary affair to the magistrates, who will search into it.’

‘I have been thinking of doing so this whole day,’ said Irvan; ‘but I reflected
that

that my strange appearance would cause me to be disregarded as a lunatic, or a dreamer and a visionary.'

'There is no danger of that now,' said I; 'our stories, the time and place, all agree so exactly, that I am well assured that hapless female will prove to have been Rhodiska: if it should not be so, we shall rescue some other distressed female from wretchedness, and restore her to her parents, whose feelings must be no less acute than those of yourself and Count Petrowitz.'

"As soon as we had made our frugal supper, we retired to rest; and at day-break the next morning, we walked to the nearest village, where I hired a couple of horses to carry us to Cracow. As we entered that city, we met my son and a party of police officers, who were then going to search the Castle of Vistulof; but we told them, that we had brought more certain information, and prevailed upon them to turn back with us to the magistrate, where

Irvan

Irvan gave in his wonderful story on oath. The worthy and indefatigable magistrate thought this affair of so much consequence, that he ordered a chaise for himself, to investigate it in person. Irvan conducted us to the mouth of the cavern, where our journey was crowned with that success which renders us all happy."

CHAP. VII.

EVERY one admired the strange interference of Providence, in bringing about this discovery. "Where is Irvan," said the Count, "who has been the instrument made use of to restore us to peace?"

"In spite of all our endeavours to bring him

him with us," replied Byloff, " he left us to return to his solitude, to enjoy, as he told us, the pleasure of having been useful to mankind, of whom he long ago thought he had taken leave for ever."

The Count then informed Leopold of the notice which he had received, and that there were only four days more to that appointed for the trial. " You see," added he, " how seasonable was your unexpected deliverance." After some consultation, it was agreed that Leopold, and all his witnesses, should set out for Cracow the next morning, in order to give time to the lawyers to make their final preparations for the occasion.

This matter being adjusted, the Count desired that every one might leave the room, except his daughter and Leopold. When they were all gone, he raised himself in the bed, and addressed them thus :

" Leopold, if I am not mistaken, you love my daughter."

" That

“That term is too presumptuous for me in my present situation,” cried Leopold, throwing himself on his knees; “but I would readily yield my life to be of any service to her.”

“Daughter,” said the Count, “I think you are not indifferent in respect to Leopold.”

She blushed, and cast down her eyes in silence.

“I am not mistaken,” continued the Count; “and I will confess, that I have witnessed your mutual attachment with pleasure. I think that I shall consult my daughter’s happiness better, by giving her to a man of courage, virtue, and honour, than to one without either, whatever may be his rank. Leopold, the day approaches which is to create you Count Rosomaski, or to leave you Leopold Byloff for life. The event will make no difference in my opinion; and, that you may not think I would grant that to Count Rosomaski,
which

which I would refuse to Leopold Byloff, I here declare, that I think you *now* worthy to be my son-in-law."

It would be impossible to describe the emotions which this generous declaration roused in the breast of Leopold. He grasped the Count's hand, and then cast a look at Rhodiska, to see whether she sanctioned his happiness.

"Is my daughter of the same opinion?" said the Count.

"I have too great a deference for my father's opinion," replied the ingenuous maid, "not to be guided by it, even if it were not so congenial with my own, as, I must confess, it is in the present instance."

"Then give him your hand," said the Count.

Leopold instantly threw himself at her feet, and taking the hand which she presented to him, he imprinted on it the dumb signs of a most ardent passion.

"Now leave me to seek some repose," said

said the Count—"after the extraordinary incidents of this day, I require it."

Leopold led Rhodiska out of the chamber, and retiring to the garden, where no one could observe them, he gave vent to all the tender expressions which honour no longer bound him to smother in his impassioned breast. Rhodiska, who looked upon their fate as united, did not attempt to conceal the pleasure which his passion gave her, neither did she blush to confess that it was mutual. Never did a flame burn with greater brightness and purity!

The next morning, Leopold, after having taken leave of the Count and his daughter, set out for Cracow, accompanied by Byloff, (carrying a casket, of which no one besides himself was acquainted with the contents), Ludowico, and several of the tenants of the Count, who offered to escort them to that city. The magistrate had informed Rhodiska, that she would be a material witness on the trial; but she refused to

to leave her father, till the day preceding that of the trial. When Leopold arrived at Cracow, he passed the greatest part of the interval with his lawyers.

On the day preceding that on which the trial was to come on, Leopold dined with one of his lawyers at his house, which was at some little distance from the city. It was late before they had finally arranged their business, and the lawyer would have detained Leopold till the morning; but, as Rhodiska was expected to arrive in Cracow that evening, no entreaties nor persuasions could prevail on him to stay. As the distance was only trifling, he had walked thither, and would not accept the offer of a horse to take him back. The night was very fine, and the moon shone in all its splendor. Leopold reached the bridge across the Vistula, without entertaining any apprehensions of danger. When he was about the middle of it, he saw the lengthened shadow of a man, and heard some person behind him. He turned round
VOL. I. II suddenly,

suddenly, and, by that lucky movement, received a thrust of a dagger in his arm, which was intended for his back: he instantly pushed the assassin from him, and drawing a pistol, which he carried in his girdle, shot him dead. Two more were ready to revenge their fallen comrade; and Leopold, drawing out the other pistol, luckily brought the foremost to the ground. The other now attempted to close with him; but Leopold shifted his ground, and avoided several thrusts which were made at him. The moon, which shone full in the face of the remaining assassin, discovered him to be Lanfranco. Leopold had discharged both his pistols, yet scorned to fly. As Lanfranco again made towards him, he threw one of the discharged pistols, which struck him on the head with such force as to make him reel. Leopold instantly ran up to him, and struck the hand which held the dagger so violently with the but-end of the other pistol, that it dropped the dagger. Not knowing whether

ther he might have any other weapon concealed, Leopold would not stoop to pick it up; but, seizing Lanfranco round the waist, he flung him, with Herculean force, over the bridge, into the stream. He then sent the bodies of the other two assassins the same road, and went off, with all haste, towards his lodging, which he reached without any further interruption.

Rhodiska had arrived several hours before, and was expecting him with the utmost impatience, which Byloff and Ludowico were endeavouring to calm, when he came to the door. He no sooner entered the room, than Rhodiska discovered that he was pale, agitated, and his clothes covered with blood. She cried out, and fell senseless on the floor. Leopold flew to raise her up, and could not be prevailed upon to quit her till she came to herself: that instant he exclaimed, "Rhodiska! my life! my soul! behold your Leopold!—Your fears are vain—I am not hurt." This seasonable assurance prevented a rapse;

and she had strength enough to ask, what was the meaning of the stains on his dress? Leopold told her, he had received a wound, but that it was only a scratch. Byloff got him out of the room, under pretence of changing his dress; but, in reality, the good old man dreaded that Leopold disguised the truth from Rhodiska, and that the wound was dangerous. On stripping, however, it was discovered that the dagger had only wounded the fleshy part of the arm, in a manner no way dangerous. Byloff cleansed it with water, and applied some lint and a bandage to stop the hæmorrhage, which was all that was necessary. Leopold then hastily changed his clothes, and returned to relieve Rhodiska from her apprehensions. After Byloff had assured her that there was not the least danger, Leopold told them, that it was a very lucky wound, since, if he had not received it, he should never have been freed from the vengeance of so cruel and sanguinary an enemy as ever man had to contend against.

He

He then related the manner in which he had ridded himself of Lanfranco, and his two other knights of the dagger. This intelligence was very consoling to the whole of them ; but it was concluded, that the most profound secrécy ought to be observed on the subject.

The ensuing morning, Cracow was thronged with strangers, whom the report of the extraordinary trial which was to take place, had drawn together. Every avenue to the court was blocked up ; and it was not without the greatest difficulty, that those who had business there could get into their places.

The trial at length began, and the most solemn silence prevailed. The deposition of Byloff's wife was produced by the priest and notary, who swore, that it was taken at her own request ; had remained in their hands, sealed up, ever since ; and never been broken open till that day. The deposition was then read. It stated, that

when the Countess of Gustavus Rosomaski died, her infant son was committed to her to suckle with her own son, then about the same age: that, after the death of Count Gustavus, his brother Theodoric tampered with the deponent and her husband, to substitute his own child instead of his brother's: that, grateful for the favours of the late Count and Countess, and desirous to spare the life of their innocent babe, they fled to a neighbouring forest on the estate of Count Petrowitz, where they built a cottage, and lived in the utmost privacy, to prevent the pursuit of Theodoric: that they took nothing with them which did not belong to them, except a box, containing the linen made up by the Countess herself for her infant, and a coral and gold necklace, with a portrait of the Countess attached, which she herself had put about the infant's neck: that the youth whom they had educated as their own, under the name of Leopold, was the
infant

infant son of Gustavus Count Rosomaski and his Countess, and the lawful heir of his titles and possessions.

Byloff then corroborated his wife's deposition, and produced the box containing the clothes and necklace, the portrait attached to which was known, to many in court, to be that of the Countess. He swore that the present claimant was the Leopold alluded to by his wife in her deposition, which was true in every respect.

Another witness, whom Byloff had discovered to have lived at Vistulof at the time of the pretended death of Count Gustavus's infant, swore that, at the time, it was remarked by all the domestics, that not one of them, except Cassimir and Zulasko, two persons who were in the greatest confidence of Theodoric, had ever been permitted, or pretended to have seen the corpse.

Rhodiska, Ludowico, and all those who knew any thing of the infamous attempts of Lanfranco to defeat the decree of the

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court,

court, by putting Leopold out of the way, were next examined; after which, the counsel for the claimant made a most eloquent speech, and commented on the clearness of the evidence which had been produced. Then pointing out Leopold, who was in the court, he concluded by saying, that there were many present who very well remembered the late Count Gustavus Rosomaski; and they needed only to look at the claimant, and they would instantly recognize the father in the son.

After a short pause, Cassimir, the first witness for the defendant, was called, but did not answer. For some time the court, and all the adjoining parts, rung with the name of "Cassimir!" but he did not appear; and, after waiting a considerable space, Zulasko, the second witness, was called, to as little purpose.

In fact, Cassimir and Zulasko were, at that moment, the sport of the waves of the Vistula: they were the two assassins who attempted the life of Leopold on the preceding

ceding evening, and whose bodies he had thrown over the bridge, to accompany that of their master.

When the court had again waited a considerable time with the utmost patience, the two women, who were to have sworn that Byloff's wife had been delivered of twins, were called; but whether their conscience had stung them, or they were appalled at finding themselves forsaken by Lanfranco and the two other witnesses, they had slunk out of court.

The counsel for the defendant then told the court, that the whole of the defence rested on the witnesses who had been called, and who, they were led to believe, would appear, but had not answered when called upon. They therefore submitted to the court, that, if it should be their opinion that the claimant had substantiated his claim, they must acquiesce.

Whilst the court were deliberating, a solemn pause of anxious suspense ensued. At length the decree was pronounced, to

this effect—"That the claimant had substantiated his claim to the title and possessions of Rosomaski, and that he be adjudged the same accordingly; and that the defendant must account to him for all the receipts from that estate, by himself and his father, since the death of the claimant's father, the late Count Gustavus Rosomaski."

This decree was no sooner pronounced, than the solemnity of the court was broken in upon by a burst of applause, which was begun by the tenants of Count Petrowitz, and several of those of Rosomaski, who were present through curiosity, and who rejoiced at the defeat of their late tyrant.

After having dispatched a messenger with the exhilarating tidings to Count Petrowitz, Rosomaski, for so we shall henceforwards term Leopold, with Rhodiska, Byloff, Ludowico, and a numerous train of the tenants of Dorbalec, as well as those of Vistulof, who being, before the trial, afraid to declare their sentiments, now gave the
reins

reins to the most extravagant demonstrations of joy, left Cracow on their route to Dorbalec. When they arrived there, the Count ordered the gates to be thrown open, and all comers to be entertained; but Rosomaski and Rhodiska, fearing that the noise and bustle would be too much for him in his present situation, prevailed upon him to countermand those orders, and bid the butler prepare an entertainment for the tenants, on the lawn before the castle. There the tenants of Dorbalec and Vistulof, intermingled, and enlivened by the Count's good cheer, enjoyed their rustic revelry in perfect harmony.

The Count, having summoned Rosomaski and Rhodiska to his bedside, addressed them thus:—

“ My dear children, only one thing remains to crown your and my happiness. Need I mention it?—It is your union. Let the ceremony be this instant performed. I have sent for a priest, who is now in the castle. It is useless to delay

what we all wish for, and is within our reach."

Rosomaski threw himself on his knees by the bedside, and thanked the Count in the warmest terms: he rose only to prostrate himself again before Rhodiska, and implore her not to refuse him that boon which her father had proffered.

"I hope," said Rhodiska, crimsoning, "that I have ever complied with my father's wishes."

"Enough!" cried the Count—"let the priest be sent for."

The impatient Rosomaski would not wait the slow motions of an uninterested messenger—he flew to find the priest, and returned with him instantly. The knot, which death alone could dissolve, was then tied, and Rosomaski embraced his own Rhodiska. The news soon spread throughout the castle, and reached the lawn, whence the shouts of the happy rustics re-echoed them back again to the castle.

After several days passed in rejoicing,

Byloff

Byloff and Ludowico went to Vistulof, to take possession of it in the name of Leopold Rosomaski. They met with no opposition, as Lanfranco had never been heard of since he went to Cracow; which, to those who knew what happened there, was no wonder; neither was he so well beloved, that any one interested himself in his fate.

CHAP. VIII.

THE happiness of Rosomaski and Rhodiska would have known no bounds, if it had not been interrupted by their fears for the Count her father, whose health declined very visibly. In due time, she presented

sented her husband with a daughter, who was baptized Paulina; and the noble soul of Count Petrowitz, which seemed to linger on earth, only till it witnessed this completion of their happiness, was now preparing to take its flight to the regions of immortality. He delayed, almost to the latest moment, to give the melancholy intelligence to his children; but he was at last obliged to summon them to his bedside.

“My dear children,” said he, taking one of their hands in each of his, “there is one debt which all of us must pay; but it is terrible only to those who have not prepared themselves for it. I trust that is not my case. I have endeavoured to fulfill my duty in life; as a son, a husband, a father, a man, and a christian: death, therefore, has no terrors for me. My daughter, I leave you in the arms of a man whose virtue has been proved—My son, I have given you the strongest mark of my esteem, by entrusting to your care the most sacred pledge which Heaven ever confided

fided to mine. Continue happy in each other, and may the Almighty bless you both!"

After a pause, which was interrupted only by the heart-rending sobs and sighs of Rhodiska, the Count added—

"My dear children, leave me now—I have done with the affairs of this world, and must devote the few remaining moments to prepare for the next. God preserve you!"

Rosomaski grasped his hand, and then took Rhodiska's, to lead her out of the chamber; but she no sooner saw herself about to be taken from her father for the last time, than she gave vent to her grief, and falling on the bed, bedewed his face with her tears. The Count beckoned to Rosomaski to take her away; and he carried her out of the room, quite senseless.

Two hours afterwards, the good old Count breathed his last.

During the three succeeding days, Rosomaski suffered Rhodiska to give vent to her

her grief, without attempting to stop the torrent. It then became necessary to offer her some consolation.

“The loss of a tender and affectionate parent,” said he, “is great—it is irreparable: but it is the will of Heaven, and submission is piety. Consider, my dearest Rhodiska, that you have fulfilled your duty as a daughter; but you have still one no less important to perform—that of a parent. If your affection for me should be entirely absorbed in the greatness of your late loss, yet do not let it rob our little innocent, our Paulina, of a mother’s attentions.”

At these words he brought the infant, and holding it towards Rhodiska, he said, “Will you suffer your immoderate grief to deprive us of this too, our only consolation?”

Rhodiska clasped the infant, and letting fall a shower of tears, her grief began to abate, as her maternal tenderness revived. On the day preceding that in which the
last

last mournful token of respect was to be paid to the Count's remains, Rosomaski prevailed upon her to suffer herself to be removed to Vistulof, where every thing had been prepared for their reception.

Rosomaski thought that the best mode of restoring peace to the wounded mind of Rhodiska, would be that of finding some little agreeable employment for her; and Byloff soon gave him an opportunity, by acquainting him, that the unfortunate daughter of old Irvan was still at Vistulof, and that he had made known to her some part of his adventure with him in his solitude.

“ My dear Rhodiska,” said Rosomaski, “ this is your affair. Here is one of your own sex who has been imprudent; but we have no reason to believe that she has been viciously so. Besides that, to her misfortune we owe our deliverance from Lanfranco, and the happiness which we now enjoy in each other, I know that the sensibility

sibility of your heart will be delighted at restoring this erring female to the right path. Suppose you were to converse with her, and let her find that she is not abandoned by all the world."

"It will be an agreeable task to me," replied Rhodiska, "to restore her to herself and to her father."

Zerbetta was sent for, and Rosomaski left the room, that there might be no check upon their conversation. Rhodiska, who, without the least tincture of prudery, was strictly virtuous, received Zerbetta with the utmost kindness; and having expressed her sense of the obligations which herself and her husband lay under to her father, she made that a pretence of wishing to do whatever she could to render the situation of his daughter comfortable. Either a tender remembrance of her aged father, or Rhodiska's kindness, or perhaps both, suffused the eyes of Zerbetta with tears.

"Alas,

“ Alas, Madam,” replied she, “ you know my unfortunate story. I am unworthy of your favour, and of a father’s solicitude. Suffer me to live with you, and, from your example, to endeavour, in future, to retrieve what is past.”

“ My dear Zerbetta,” cried Rhodiska, rising and embracing her, “ it delights my heart to hear that you are sensible of your errors. The greatest obstacle is overcome, and your return to virtue will be easy. Your father must be reconciled to you.”

“ Ah, Madam, that is what I most wish and dread. I long to see him again, to embrace his aged knees, and to entreat forgiveness; but how can I bear his just reproaches ?”

“ He will make you none,” said Rhodiska—“ My husband will prepare him to forget the past, and to receive you as if you had been faultless.”

Rosomaski entered the room soon afterwards, and having been informed of what had passed, he assured Zerbetta of his good offices

offices in so obliging a manner, as drew the tears again from her eyes.

The kind offices of humanity, in which Rhodiska had been engaged, had so animated her face, and made her forget her own sorrows, that Rosomaski was determined not to lose what he had so happily gained. He immediately dispatched Byloff, well mounted, to bring Irvan with him to Vistulof. In less than three hours, Byloff fulfilled his task, and Rosomaski went to prepare Irvan for the meeting.

“ My good friend,” said Rosomaski, “ after owing all my happiness on earth to you, it cannot surprise you, that I should be anxious to contribute towards yours. I am not going to offer you wealth, but I think I can restore you to that peace of mind, to which you have been so long a stranger. Your daughter is now under this roof; and, from the conversation which my Rhodiska has had with her, it will rejoice you to hear, that she is truly sensible of her errors—that she is anxious to return
to

to virtue. There is only one thing wanting—in order to reconcile her to herself, you must be reconciled to her.”

“You have indeed rendered me happy,” replied Irvan—“and, that there may be no check to my daughter’s laudable resolve, you may acquaint her that I forgive her—will never cease to pray Heaven to confirm her in it, and, with my last breath, will bless her.”

“But you must see her,” said Rosomaski.

“I can refuse nothing,” replied Irvan, “to those who are reclaiming my stray lamb.”

Rosomaski led Irvan to the room where Zerbetta was sitting with Rhodiska. Irvan no sooner entered the room than he paused, and looked earnestly at Zerbetta. For some moments she was chained to her seat by a conscious awe, and covered her face with her hands; but presently recovering herself, she rose, and threw herself at his feet. Paternal fondness was instantly triumphant

umphant in the breast of Irvan, who flung his arms around her neck, and sobbed out, "My dear Zerbetta ! my dear child ! may Heaven forgive thee, as I do most sincerely !" This tender scene between father and daughter, revived, in the heart of Rhodiska, her recent loss ; and she was once more sinking into despondency, when Rosomaski, who guessed her sensations, embraced her most tenderly, and whispered to her—" I knew how grateful this scene would be to your susceptible heart ; finish what you have so well begun, and you will have all the glory of having rescued an unhappy female from wretchedness."

Irvan had, by this time, raised his daughter, and leading her towards Rhodiska—

" Behold," said he, " how happy are the votaries of virtue ! They find in it a consolation under the severest trials. My daughter, if ever you should again find yourself wavering, remember the Countess Rosomaski, and that will be sufficient to confirm you."

Rosomaski

Rosomaski then introduced the subject of their future mode of life, and made Irvan two proposals—that he should have his former cottage, or some other, rent free; or that he and his daughter should reside in the castle.

“For myself,” replied Irvan, “I should prefer my old solitude, to which I am habituated; but my daughter can never be so well placed as in the service of the Countess, from whose example she will receive daily benefit.”

“Then tarry here both of you,” said Rosomaski—“Zerbetta will find a friend in my Rhodiska; and you need not pine for your solitude, as you may live as retired, and employ yourself in what manner you please.”

Irvan and Zerbetta joyfully accepted the proposal, and Rosomaski was rejoiced at having found means of diverting the grief of Rhodiska, who entered with pleasure into the scheme of making a permanent reformation in the wandering female. So
humane

humane an undertaking must have created esteem in every upright heart ; but it created only malignant jealousy in the perfidious bosom of Dorothea, whose guilt had escaped detection, and who had accompanied her mistress to Vistulof. When Rhodiska was carried off by Lanfranco's emissaries, she had pretended to make a great struggle, as if to rescue her, which she did not intend should be effectual ; and uttered a loud cry, which she knew could never reach the Castle of Dorbalec, at that distance. It had had, however, the effect of deceiving Rhodiska, who imagined that she was left in despair. When Dorothea ran in to alarm the castle, and also when her mistress was brought back safe, she counterfeited the extremes of grief and joy so well, that no one could suspect her of imitation. She hoped still to enjoy the misplaced confidence of her mistress ; but, after her nuptials, Rhodiska wisely and prudently resolved to make her husband only her confidant. Dorothea was, at first,

hurt at this resolve; but she presently comforted herself with the thoughts of the money which had been the price of her treachery, and with being still the principal attendant on the person of Rhodiska, whence she still hoped to derive a profit.

A connection in vice, as well as in virtue, often begets a sympathetic intimacy: so it was with Dorothea and Zokalef, one of the male domestics of Dorbalec, who had been also bribed by Lanfranco, and was the person who had made the hole in the tower, through which the emissaries of Lanfranco had entered, and Rhodiska had been carried off. Dorothea and Zokalef had agreed upon an union, as soon as their treachery should have procured them what they should think a sum sufficient to enable them to launch out into the world.

When Dorothea was on the point of leaving Dorbalec, to follow Rhodiska to Vistulof, she hinted at the connection which subsisted between herself and Zokalef, to Rhodiska, who, willing to please her favourite,

vourite, prevailed upon Rosomaski to let Zokalef also attend them. Rosomaski was the more inclined to receive Zokalef, who had lived several years at Dorbalec, because he had given directions to Byloff to dismiss all the domestics at Vistulof, who had been engaged since his father's death; as he could not depend upon any who had merited the confidence of Theodoric or Lanfranco. When Byloff had performed this order, he found that, of all the domestics, the old porter was the only person who was of that description which he was to retain. This matter he had signified to Rosomaski, who was glad to have a domestic who had lived so long with the late Count Petrowitz as Zokalef had done. A gardener, who did not sleep in the castle, and two female servants, who did, were all the additional domestics which were at Vistulof, when Rosomaski and Rhodiska removed thither.

Dorothea, who vainly imagined that, as soon as the first passion of love began to abate,

abate, she would gain her usual ascendancy over her mistress, and be able to turn it to her future advantage, was chagrined at seeing Zerbetta, whom she regarded as a rival, take up so much of her mistress's attention. But she dissembled her jealousy, in the hopes of finding some opportunity, for which she was determined to lie in wait, of ruining her in the esteem of Rhodiska. Zerbetta, however, conducted herself so discreetly, and gained so much upon Rhodiska, by the constant attention which she paid to the little Paulina, that Dorothea could scarcely restrain the marks of her resentment, and disappointed avarice.

In the mean time, as a distance of space softens and renders pleasing those rugged precipices, which, seen close at hand, would have created awe and terror, so does a distance of time wear away those troubles, which, at first, appear insupportable and overwhelming. Rhodiska's keen grief for the loss of her father, began, at length, to subside into a veneration and tender re-

spect for his memory. Rosomaski never lost a single opportunity of contributing to the tranquillity of his Rhodiska. As Vistulof was, from thenceforth, to be the chief place of their residence, Rosomaski determined to render it not only completely convenient, but also to give a degree of elegance to the exterior. He consulted Rhodiska, and they drew plans together. This employment kept her mind almost constantly engaged, and banished melancholy reflections. When they had adopted what they thought the best plan, he prevailed upon her also to give her opinion on the execution of it.

In little more than the space of a year, the interior of the castle was not only rendered convenient and pleasant, but the greatest part of the rubbish, which incumbered the exterior, and almost denied a passage, was removed. Those venerable relics of antiquity, which still retained any part of their pristine grandeur and form, were spared ; and, as they appeared standing

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ing by themselves, they resembled, on approaching the castle, those ancient Egyptian ruins, which are still the admiration of travellers, in the neighbourhood of Alexandria.

When all these improvements were nearly completed, Rosomaski and Rhodiska began to arrange their different departments of domestic economy. Although Rosomaski had hired a gardener to perform all the laborious part of that occupation, yet, as he was convinced that the art of cultivating the earth was the most agreeable, as well as the noblest of all employments, he took a delight in attending the flower-beds, the fruit-trees, and the more delicate plants. Oftentimes he held in his hand the spade, the watering-pot, or the pruning-knife. Rhodiska was no less disposed than her husband, to take a pleasure in every thing which pertained to rural employments. She divided her time between the attention which she paid to her little Paulina, the caresses of conjugal love, and the relaxa-

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tions which are derived from the study of music, and the interesting details of a poultry-yard. Assisted by a single female domestic, who performed the laborious part, she herself sufficed for the government of all her subjects. She would often thank her stars, for having to sway only docile fowls, and other different species, equally pacific and tractable.

Sometimes, when domestic affairs would permit, Rosomaski and Ludowico would amuse themselves with shooting; at other times, Rhodiska would accompany them, when they went upon the more sedentary amusement, of ensnaring the finny race with the treacherous bait.

But the details of the marriage-state, however delightful to the parties themselves, are monotonous and tedious to strangers, unless marked by some very strange occurrences, and prominent adventures. If ever there was an union which promised conjugal felicity, it was that of Rhodiska and Rosomaski. At the time
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when it took place, Rhodiska was on the point of completing her seventeenth year. If nature, the better to assure to virtue the homage of mortals, was to offer it to their eyes under the form of beauty, she could not have adorned the female, who was intended to represent it, with more perfections than she had bestowed on Rhodiska. A noble dignity impressed on her forehead, discovered the elevation of her soul; the fire of sentiment animated her looks; the tender carnation of modesty tinged her cheeks; gentleness and kindness danced in her smiles; her auburn hair played without art, on the velvet tissue of her neck of alabaster; the display of her shape was designed by the graces; the accents of her voice were melody itself: to sum up the whole, there was spread over her person an intoxicating charm, whose power could never fail to seduce all eyes, and to subdue all hearts. This union of so many perfections would seem never to have existed, but in the imagination; and yet na-

ture had realized it, to make of Rhodiska a most enchanting woman. To have added another charm would have been superfluous; as, in the words of our immortal poet—

To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or, with taper light,
To seek the beauteous eye of heav'n to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

SHAKESPEARE.

The goddess had been scarcely less prodigal towards Rosomaski, who was, at the time of his marriage, in his twentieth year. A majestic port, large black eyes, in which his lofty soul was seen in all its beauty, a countenance, which pleased still more by the expression of its *tout ensemble* than by the regularity of its features, a frank and generous character, a mind replete with delicacy, and a heart formed for love and friendship, were the gifts which rendered him

him worthy of Rhodiska. Rosomaski, however, was not without a defect. It is very rare to find a couple equally perfect. Fiery and impetuous, he had less mildness than Rhodiska. If he had had the least reason to doubt the attachment and virtue of his wife, he would have had a propensity to jealousy. More than once he gave way to slight sallies of warmth; but Rhodiska had so much merit, that she knew how to allay them almost in an instant, and in the same instant she pardoned them, in consideration of the goodness of his heart. Rosomaski knew how to appreciate the value of Rhodiska, and he rendered her tenderness for tenderness. It was no wonder then that two such hearts, cemented by love, should experience, when unassailed by foreign troubles, the utmost harmony, pleasure, ease, and tranquillity.

Such had been the state of Rosomaski and Rhodiska during several years; in which space, Rhodiska had presented her husband with three children, beside Pau-

lina. They seemed now to have reached the top of Fortune's wheel; but the fickle goddess soon convinced them that it was never stationary, and one of its revolutions brought all their felicity to the ground.

A fever, which was supposed to have been introduced into the castle by a mendicant, who had not in vain solicited shelter during a stormy night, raged violently within the walls of Vistulof, and, in less than a week, carried off the three younger children of Rhodiska and Rosomaski, the faithful and worthy Byloff, and several of the domestics. Paulina also caught the infection, and her life was, for some days, despaired of; but it pleased Heaven to spare the afflicted parents that one consolation; and she, deep as were their wounds, made them still retain an attachment for life.

Byloff, according to his last wish, was deposited under the same sod with his beloved partner; and the filial piety of Ludowico, and almost filial love of Rosomaski, caused

caused it to be surrounded with an iron railing, to prevent the depository of these dear remains from being intruded upon, except when the eyes of filial duty and of friendship approached, to drop the sacred tear to their memory.

This dreadful loss was only the fore-runner of unparalleled sufferings, which did not approach the walls of Vistulof with a limping pace, but followed one another in rapid, and almost continued succession.

CHAP. IX.

ONE evening, when Rosomaski and Ludowico returned from their usual amusements, they were met by Rhodiska at the hall-door, apparently in great consternation. Rosomaski instantly enquired into the cause of it. "You know," replied she, "that I do not easily give way to groundless fears; but, during the greatest part of the last hour, my ears have been assailed by rumbling confused sounds, which appear to issue from underneath the castle, as if some persons were forcing their way into the subterraneans." Rosomaski told her, that, in all probability, some of the

the labourers on the exterior of the castle, had been at work later than usual ; and that the echoes of the sounds of their pick-axes and sledge-hammers, in the subterraneans, had produced the cause of her alarm.

Dorothea affirmed, that, although she was sitting in the same room with her mistress, yet she had heard nothing extraordinary. “ I shall not disbelieve my own sense of hearing, for all that,” said Rhodiska—“ neither shall I be able to rest till the subterraneans are searched.” Rosomaski told her, that she should have that satisfaction immediately ; and, whilst he and Ludowico were arming themselves, Dorothea was sent to bid Zokalef get a torch, and accompany them. After a long interval, she returned with Zokalef, who walked before Rosomaski and Ludowico, throughout the whole of the spacious vaults. Nothing was seen, nothing heard, except the sounds of their feet and voices, echoed from one to the other of these caverns. They looked into every corner, every recess, but discovered

discovered nothing to alarm them. Rosomaski demanded of Zokalef, if he had heard any unusual noises? "None," replied he, "but what are usual, and those ceased when the workmen had finished their day's labour." Rosomaski and Ludowico were now persuaded that the sounds which Rhodiska had heard, were only those of the workmen, and they returned to put an end to her disquietude. At the usual hour, they all retired to rest.

Night had long enveloped our hemisphere in her sable mantle, and all the cares of life were nearly drowned in sleep, when Rosomaski and Rhodiska were suddenly alarmed by a loud grating noise, and rumbling motion, somewhat resembling the rolling of an immense weight over a pavement. Rosomaski instantly rose and seized his arms, which he had placed on a table in his chamber. He took the lamp, which was usually burning at night, on account of the child, and proceeded to Ludowico's chamber, who had been awakened by the same

same noise, and was dressing himself. They descended into the subterraneans, and, just as they reached the entrance into the principal vault, they heard the sound of footsteps—they stopped, and presently saw a glimmering light. They advanced towards the door, which was half open; and, as soon as they pushed it, they beheld a man with a dark lanthorn in his hand, whose weak and vacillating light was not sufficient to enable them to distinguish his features. Instantly they heard a voice saying, “ You have no reason to be alarmed, my masters; it is only I, Zokalef. Having heard the noise, which has undoubtedly awakened you, I rose to discover the cause of it, and I think I have succeeded. If you look at this mill-stone, which was placed on its edge against the wall, but has slidden down, and fallen on the pavement, you will be convinced, as well as myself, that there is no occasion to look any further.” As this vault contained several mill-stones, for the use of the mill belonging to Vistulof, one

of the largest of which lay horizontally on the pavement, this explanation of Zokalef appeared quite satisfactory. They re-ascended—Rosomaski again wished his friend a good night; and, after having removed the disquietude of Rhodiska, they passed the remainder of the night without any further disturbance.

As these alarms were succeeded by a profound tranquillity during a month, the inhabitants of Vistulof had recovered their ease, and thought themselves in perfect security; but they reckoned without their host.

One night, the tinkling bell had sounded that hour of silence, in which mortals are commonly plunged into so death-like a sleep, that a slight noise will not rouse them out of it: such was the state of Rosomaski; but, as a tender solicitude always keeps a mother half awake, lest her infant should require her attention, Rhodiska slumbered only, and so slightly, that she imagined she heard footsteps in the gallery.

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She listened with the utmost attention, and heard them stop at the door of her chamber. Dreading to give Rosomaski a false alarm, she gently drew back the curtain, and listened again. She heard a voice saying, in a low murmuring tone, "Do not forget the child:" another answered, "Not one of them shall escape." No longer doubting the danger which threatened them, she cried out, "Rouse, Rosomaski! arm! arm!" Rosomaski had only just time to seize his pistols before the door was forced open; and three frightful figures entered, lighted by dark lanthorns. They all wore masks, which were painted so as to inspire horror, as well as their dress, which was black, with red cloaks. Their arms were naked to the shoulders, and their hands grasped murderous axes, whose polished blades reflected the rays of their lanthorns, which were suspended to their girdles. At the sight of these satellites of death, Rhodiska uttered a piercing cry, and shrunk under the clothes, to avoid the

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the terrific sight. Even the intrepid soul of Rosomaski felt a momentary torpor, which prevented his beginning the work of death. He was, however, soon roused by the entrance of a fourth person, who, without uttering a syllable, aimed a stroke of his sabre at one of the preceding three, and instantly the sounds of the clashing sabre and axes, made all the walls of the old castle resound. At that instant, Rosomaski discharged one of his pistols, and wounded one of the three villains in the left arm. He drew back, and rejoined the other two, who were repulsing the person who had come to the assistance of this unfortunate family, in the gallery. Rosomaski pursued him into the gallery, and there the action recommenced. The person who had made so fortunate a diversion for Rosomaski, was Ludowico, who, being awakened by the cries of Rhodiska, had flown to the defence of his friends. He continued to fight with the greatest resolution ; but, at length, Rosomaski beheld him fall
under

under the blow of one of the villains, who had contrived to get behind him. Rosomaski, who, till then, had reserved the fire of his remaining pistol, for fear of hurting his friend, instantly fired, and the axe dropped from the hand of the villain who had felled his friend, and was preparing to dispatch him with it. Rosomaski was then unarmed; yet he was about to grapple with one of the assassins, in hopes to wrest the axe from his hand, when Rhodiska, who had assumed courage enough to look out when she heard the sounds retiring to the gallery, and saw that Rosomaski, in his hurry, had forgotten his sabre, with the greatest presence of mind brought it to him. Rosomaski, maddened to desperation by the fall of Ludowico, fell upon the assassins with so much fury, that, finding themselves unable to withstand his impetuosity, and smarting with the wounds from his strokes, which they had not been able to parry with their axes, they took to flight, and, darkening their
lanthorns,

lanthorns, prevented Rosomaski from seeing which way they went. Rosomaski called to Rhodiska to bring him the lamp, which he had no sooner received, than he descended the great staircase, and searched all the lower parts of the castle, without seeing any one. At last he perceived that one of the windows had been broken open, and he no longer doubted but that they had made their escape through it.

Rosomaski then began to think of the situation of Ludowico, and he ascended the staircase and hastened back to the gallery, where he found him in the arms of Irvan, whom the reports of the pistols had roused, whilst Rhodiska and Zerbetta were staunching the blood of his wounds, which were on the side of his head, and on his shoulder. Ludowico was still senseless, but his wounds did not appear to be very dangerous. The axe had fortunately glided from his head to his shoulder: if it had fallen directly on the former, it must have been instant death. Rosomaski helped to convey him to his bed,

bed, where, after binding up his wounds, and giving him some cordial drops, he had the happiness of seeing him give signs of returning life. He had been at first stunned by the blow, and the loss of blood in that interval had caused him to faint, as soon as the first effect began to wear off.

Rosomaski, with great difficulty, prevailed upon Rhodiska to retire to her own chamber, to take care of her child, whilst he himself, with Irvan and Zerbetta, remained to watch Ludowico. After nearly two hours passed in the most anxious suspense, Rosomaski was overjoyed to hear his friend regain the powers of speech ; but he intreated him to be silent, and endeavour to compose himself. In a short time he began to slumber, and, at length, appeared to be in a deep sleep. Irvan and Zerbetta then desired Rosomaski to retire to his own chamber, and seek that repose of which he must stand in need. They represented, that he would not only break
his

his own rest, but that of Rhodiska, who would not be composed in his absence. They promised to take as much care of his friend as if he were present, and to call him if any change should take place.

Rosomaski yielded reluctantly to these remonstrances, and returned to his own chamber, to calm the perturbation of his beloved Rhodiska. He found her anxiously hanging over the little Paulina, who was still in the happy sleep of infancy, and had not been disturbed by the alarming and disastrous tragedy which had been just acted. Her tender mother, contemplating her with ecstasy, and lightly kissing her vermilion cheeks, was enjoying the happiness of still possessing her beloved child, and seeing her escaped from the dangers which so recently threatened her existence. At the sight of Rosomaski, she ran to throw herself into his arms. The mute, yet expressive language of their embraces, evinced the lively and rapid sensations which
their

their affectionate hearts experienced, at finding themselves in each other's arms, after so terrible a crisis.

It now struck them for the first time, that although every one besides in the castle had been alarmed, yet neither Dorothea nor Zokalef had been seen. Rosomaski went to the upper story where they lay, and knocked loudly at the doors of their respective chambers; but it was some time before he could gain any answer. He bade Dorothea rise and come to her mistress's chamber, and told Zokalef to dress and attend him immediately. When they made their appearance, they both appeared as if awakened from a sound sleep. They pretended, when Rosomaski questioned them, to have heard no noise, and affected extreme surprise at their being roused so early in the morning.

As Rosomaski would not retire to rest again till he had searched the castle, he reloaded his pistols, and with his drawn sabre, accompanied by Zokalef, who carried a lamp,

lamp, he went over the whole of the apartments, and even descended into the vaults, without seeing any thing to create alarm. Having thus satisfied himself, that the assassins must have made their escape through the window which he had found broken, he once more retired to rest, and the remainder of the night was perfectly calm.

In the morning, the first thoughts of Rosomaski and Rhodiska were directed to Ludowico, and they were rejoiced to hear, that he had passed several hours in sound repose, and felt himself so well when he awoke, that he was preparing to meet them, as usual, at breakfast. Rosomaski hastened to his chamber, and, after having congratulated him on his favourable condition, said, “ My dear friend and brother, how sincerely do we rejoice at our late fortunate escape, since your own precious life has not been endangered by it ! Ah ! if it had been, we should have set little value on our own lives, which would have been purchased at too dear a rate. Come
and

and receive the heartfelt thanks and congratulations of a wife, a mother, who owes the existence of herself, her husband, and child, to your intrepidity."

Rhodiska, on her part, uttered to Ludowico all the effusions of a heart grateful and sensible of so vast an obligation. Ludowico expressed his happiness at the escape of those who were so dear to him, and at his having been instrumental to it, at the expence of only a trifling hurt.

After breakfast, Rosomaski dispatched messengers, to acquaint all the magistrates of the neighbouring villages and towns with this unprecedented affair, and to request them to keep a look-out for the perpetrators. The circumstance which gave this worthy family the greatest alarm was, that, from the words which Rhodiska had heard them drop, they were evidently assassins, and their designs were against the life of the very infant.

"If they had been only robbers," said Rhodiska, "my mind would have been at

rest, as to any future attempt of the kind. They would not risk it again, when they might expect we should have been prepared for them. Their words were—‘ *Do not forget the child!*’—‘ *Let not one of them escape!*’ We must have some secret and malignant enemy. If Lanfranco should be alive——”

“ He cannot be,” replied Rosomaski—“ He was stunned by the blow of the pistol which I threw at him; and that, added to his rapid descent from the bridge into the water, must have rendered it impossible for him to have stemmed the current. No; he could not have escaped with life. Besides, if he had, is it credible that he would have suppressed his vengeance during so many years?”

Rosomaski was interrupted in the midst of his observations, by the entrance of Zokalef, who had been sent to inquire in the neighbourhood, if any suspicious persons had been seen lurking about? He informed them, that three deserters had been seen
passing

passing that way, whose haggard and ferocious looks appeared to bespeak them capable of any mischief. They were, therefore, the most likely persons to have been the actors of the late bloody midnight scene. He added, that they had been seen to cross into the main road, and that there were no more apprehensions to be entertained of them. Ludowico concluded, from the circumstances reported by Zokalef, that the attack had certainly been the work of those three miscreants, who had disguised themselves to prevent a discovery; and, after their defeat, had made a precipitate retreat. Ludowico either was, or, to calm the fears of Rhodiska, pretended to be of the same opinion. He affected not to entertain the least doubt, that it was rather a desperate attempt of these straggling sons of rapine and plunder, than a premeditated scheme of a permanent enemy, to destroy their peace, and glut himself with their blood.

“But they certainly sought our lives,”

K 2

said

said Rhodiska ; “ and they as certainly have carried away none of our property.”

“ The attempt on your lives,” said Ludowico, “ was, perhaps, only a preliminary of the robbery. If they had succeeded in their intended scheme of assassination, they would have proceeded to ransack the castle.”

“ But the child !” said Rhodiska—“ if they were stragglers, how could they know that there was one ? and why should she be included in their horrid designs ?”

Neither Ludowico nor Rosomaski knew what to answer to this objection ; but the latter observed, that, since the danger was over, it would be wiser to devise means to prevent a repetition, than to puzzle themselves with guessing the authors of it ; in which, after all, they might not be right. “ I cannot conceive,” added he, “ how the window, which was defended by a strong shutter, could have been forced. I will, however, this very day, cause that, and all the rest on the ground floor, to be strengthened

ened with iron bars; sufficiently strong to render any similar attempt impracticable.

Rhodiska applauded this scheme; and Ludowico, to lessen her apprehensions, declared, that he would pass the ensuing night in the watch-tower, to prevent a surprise. Rosomaski observed, that his wound must require some care, and insisted that he himself would occupy that station; and Ludowico consented to it, on condition that he might take his turn on the night following. These precautions, together with Rosomaski's assurances that the alarm had been spread abroad, and that they might rely on the vigilance of the neighbouring magistrates, composed the perturbation of Rhodiska. That night Rosomaski mounted guard; but it passed quietly, without his seeing or hearing any thing extraordinary. On the next day, they were more at ease; and, after Ludowico and Zokalef had watched the two next nights without any cause of alarm, tranquillity resumed its reign at Vistulof.

Rosomaski, however, was resolved to continue a watch every night, at least till after the *accouchement* of Rhodiska, who was far advanced in a state of pregnancy. His fears, on that account, had been much exaggerated; but Rhodiska assured him, that her late fright had had no disagreeable consequences. He had no difficulty to engage one or other of the sons of his tenants, who were eager to oblige him, to sit up every night; and, in addition to his other domestics, he engaged two of them to remain in the house, to work in the gardens and pleasure-grounds. Thus secured, the time passed on without any sinister event, until Rhodiska presented him with a fine boy, who was named Ladislaus.

The rejoicings to which this occasion gave birth, were of no short duration, and happiness reigned throughout Vistulof and Dorbalec; none of the tenants of which two estates, besides partaking of the good cheer provided by the hospitable proprietor, but received from him some more solid marks

marks of his bounty. As the time was arrived for the payment of the rents, which were all paid in produce, as Poland is a country without a maritime port, and consequently with very little cash, Rosomaski gave directions to remit all arrears to such as owed any, and to such as did not, he presented half the rent due, as some compensation for the exactions which Theodoric and Lanfranco had levied upon them. This liberality of their new lord banished the gloom which had long pervaded the cottages of the tenants, and gave them the brightest prospects. Every one was anxious to give some little token of their gratitude and respect; and Rosomaski had the felicity of observing that they regarded him as a common father, and felt a lively interest in his happiness.

But the demon of jealousy, envious of his short-lived bliss, was busily employed in preparing for him a long and continued series of the most distressing adventures. When the health of Rhodiska had been

K 4

quite

quite restored, Rosomaski set off for Dorbalec, to receive his rents. He had not been gone above an hour, before Zokalef and Dorothea came to the Countess with a basket, which the former pretended to have found on the outside of the gate. There was a label attached to it, addressed—“*To the humane proprietors of Vistulof.*” On opening the basket, it contained, to the great astonishment of Rhodiska, a fine male child, on whose breast was a paper, on which were written these words—“*An orphan implores your protection.*” Rhodiska, whose heart was as easily melted at the sight of distress, as the morning’s frost at the rising sun, instantly made the little foundling partaker of that nourishment which nature had ordained only for her own Ladislaus. She then ordered that an enquiry should be made among the tenants, for some mother who would be willing, on having a handsome compensation, to nurture the unfortunate babe, which had been thus thrown in her way. In the afternoon,

word

word was brought that the messenger, who had been sent upon this errand, had succeeded, and had found a neat person, a cottager's wife, who was ready to undertake the charge. Rhodiska set out with the infant, after having given orders that no one should say a syllable to her husband, if he returned before herself, about the child, as she intended to surprise him with the news.

Rhodiska had not been gone above half an hour, before a muleteer appeared at the gate with a large trunk, which, he said, came from Cracow, and contained some things which the Countess had ordered. Dorothea, who happened to be at hand, directed the men-servants to convey the trunk to the Count's cabinet; and the muleteer had no sooner ridden himself of his charge, than he went away.

Rosomaski returned before Rhodiska, and, on entering his cabinet, he perceived the trunk. He paid little attention to it at first, as he knew that Rhodiska had given orders.

to a shopkeeper at Cracow to send her a quantity of linen, and he did not doubt but the trunk contained what she had ordered. He was about to leave the cabinet, when he perceived a letter, addressed to the Countess, attached to the cord which fastened the trunk. He opened it without hesitation, in the supposition that it only contained a bill of the goods; but what was his astonishment at reading these words!—

“CHARMING FLORISCA,”

“At the moment I am writing this, I am on the point of inclosing myself in the prison on which we have agreed, and which will be a palace to me, since it will conduct me to your feet. I shall be sufficiently recompensed for the disagreeable hours which I shall pass in this narrow confinement, by the delightful moments which I shall pass with you. How transporting was your last letter! How flattering
ing

ing the confession which you made me, that only the authority of a father could have prevailed upon you to break those vows which your first love made to me. I have caused our infant to be inclosed in a basket, and dropped at the gate of Vistulof, as if abandoned by some unnatural parent. The deception will easily pass on the credulous Rosomaski, and you may embrace, without suspicion, the pledge of our ardent affection. When you have liberated me from my prison, we will concert the means of freeing you for ever from the heavy chains of matrimony, which a delicate lover will replace by the flowery bands of unfettered love. Rosomaski will then find that, to be happy, a husband must possess the heart of his wife. I give you now a proof, that, to be near you, I would run my breast against a naked sword, would march over burning coals, would brave the fury of the elements, and the sea, roaring under the lash of furious winds. I shall have lived long enough, after having again

sipped out of that cup which should be touched only by the immortals.”

Rosomaski experienced the most dreadful sensations whilst he was perusing this letter; but as he knew that, in similar cases, a prudent silence was far better than a great noise, he restrained the impetuous sallies of passion. He quitted the cabinet and enquired for Rhodiska. They told him, that she was gone to the cottage of one of his tenants, whom they named. He resolved to go to meet her, and to confound her with his discovery, before she could be prepared to put any deception upon him. He dissembled his grief, mounted his horse, and rode off without saying another word. Upon the road he entered into the following soliloquy:—

“What further dreadful trials am I born to undergo! Surely they must here have an end, as my heart, I feel, is mortally wounded by this last and severest. Not
half

half an hour since, I imagined myself the most beloved of husbands—I am now terribly undeceived. How capable is a woman of refinement, even in the art of deceiving! Rhodiska overwhelmed me with caresses, lavished on me the tenderest appellations, whilst she was secretly contriving to introduce, under my very roof, an infamous seducer. Cruel Rhodiska! was it necessary to make use of such profound dissimulation? How often have you said, in running over the history of our loves, that you had never felt an inclination for any man besides myself? I now see that your actions, your words, were all deceit. I now hate, as much as I once loved you. Oh! what odious words have escaped my lips! Rhodiska, do not believe me—I am not in my senses—I love, I doat upon you—I should be worse than a barbarian, to condemn before I have heard you. Was there ever a soul which appeared so pure; protestations which seemed so ingenuous? No—impossible. That accursed
letter

letter must have been the work of some disappointed rival, to poison our hitherto unembittered chalice of felicity."

As he ended this speech, he perceived the cottage to which he had been directed, and riding up to the door, a woman appeared with two children in her arms. He demanded if the Countess Rosomaski was there? and was answered, that she had not been long gone. "Are these both your children?" demanded Rosomaski.

"This on my left arm is," replied the woman—"the other has been just now placed under my care by the Countess."

Rosomaski darted a furious glance at the latter unfortunate little being, and turning about his horse, rode back towards Vistulof. "There is no longer any room for doubt," said he—"the letter has opened my eyes to the truth, and the child is a proof of her duplicity and infidelity. Perjured woman! she is now returned to Vistulof to receive her paramour; but the meeting will not be so happy as they expect." He then clapped.

ped spurs to his horse, which, obeying the impatience of its rider, arrived at the gates of Vistulof, covered with foam.

Rhodiska had arrived about ten minutes before ; and, as she entered the gates, the clock sounded eight, and it was dusk. The porter informed her, that the Count had returned, but had gone out again, after some few minutes. As she entered the hall, Dorothea met her. "Madam," said she, "you will find in your cabinet a trunk, which a muleteer brought soon after you were gone. Here is the key of it, which the muleteer forgot to deliver with the trunk, and he returned with it soon after the Count went in search of you."

"I suppose," said Rhodiska, "that it is the linen which I ordered to be sent to me from Cracow."

She went to the cabinet and opened the trunk ; but, instead of linen, beheld a man. Any woman, less courageous than Rhodiska, would have fainted at the sight ; but, with her usual presence of mind, she ran

to a drawer, where she knew that Rosomaski kept a case of loaded pistols, and taking them in her hands, returned towards the trunk. Her surprise was increased, at seeing that he remained almost motionless. Compassion soon succeeded to her former emotions, when, on looking nearer, she observed that the unfortunate man had a bandage on his mouth, which was fastened at the back of his head, to prevent his making any outcry. Far from having the appearance of a man who could harbour any evil designs, his countenance wore the impression of grief and dejection, and seemed to implore her commiseration. She laid down the pistols, and assisted to draw him out of the trunk; whence, either from long confinement or the narrowness of his prison, he was extricated with difficulty. She then cut the straps which fastened the bandage upon his mouth, and prevented, as she imagined, the power of speech; but, although freed from this trammel, the man uttered only some inarticulate sounds. His
eyes,

eyes, however, appeared wet with tears of gratitude ; and to atone, by his gestures, for the deficiency of speech, he threw himself on his knees before Rhodiska, and took one of her hands, which he placed on his lips.

CHAP. X.

AT that instant the door opened, and Rhodiska heard a voice exclaiming, " Perfidious pair, your blood shall wipe away my dishonour ! " A man advanced, brandishing a glittering sabre. Rhodiska recognized Rosomaski, and fell into a swoon. The idea of being surprised, in a situation where all appearances united against her, to declare

clare her unfaithful to her conjugal vow, was more alarming to her than her personal danger. The object of her misfortune, seeing Rosomaski about to strike at him, rose instantly, seized one of the pistols which Rhodiska had placed on the floor, and put himself in an attitude of defence. Rosomaski, without losing a moment, made a blow at him; but the blade fell on a button of his coat, and, gliding off on his arm, produced no other effect than to make him drop the pistol, with which he had armed himself. Rosomaski picked it up, and, holding the muzzle to the man's breast, cried out, "Who are you, and what is your business in this place? Speak this instant, or you are a corpse!" The man only uttered some inarticulate sounds, and made some significant gestures, which were, however, incomprehensible to Rosomaski. It was so dark, that, at first, Rosomaski had not been able to distinguish the features of the man at a distance; he saw only that he was of a
fine

fine figure, capable of exciting the jealousy with which his bosom was inflamed. He thought that he laboured under some impediment of speech, or that fear had produced the same effect upon his organs. To try whether the latter was the case, he turned away the pistol from him, and said, "I am mistaken; you have not the appearance of a seducer: if so, fear not, but tell me who you are." The man still answered only by convulsive gestures. Rosomaski at length comprehended, that he wished to have him understand that he could not speak, and that he desired to be furnished with materials for writing. Rosomaski opened his writing-desk, and furnished what he required. At that instant Rhodiska recovered her senses, and exclaimed, with tears and sighs, "Alas, Rosomaski, you are deceived, by a false appearance, into a belief of my guilt; but Heaven knows my innocence!"

"What is the meaning then," replied
Rosomaski,

Rosomaski, " of all this strange scene? Am I in the land of dreams and chimeras?"

Scarcely had he finished these words, before the staircase, and the gallery leading to the cabinet, resounded with the steps of several persons, who advanced with the greatest haste. Rosomaski and Rhodiska beheld four men, who entered with a female at their head. One of the men cried out, " Do not stir, we are all armed: you have carried off a gentleman and his child—what is become of them?"

Rosomaski and Rhodiska looked at each other, unable to answer through surprise.

At that moment, the prisoner in the trunk, distracted by this strange circumstance, left off writing, and ran to the lady who came with the guard, and who called him her dear husband, her dear Vendost. The lady then turned to Rosomaski, and demanded her dear child. " I know not what to answer you," replied Rosomaski—" I am in the land of wonders. I looked upon your husband

husband as a vile seducer, who entered my walls to repeat his infamous attempts against my honour. I thought the child you speak of, was the first fruit of an illegitimate passion between your husband and my wife, before she became so. In short, I looked upon myself as the most injured man in the world; and yet I am now charged with a most dishonourable attempt against the very man by whom I thought myself mortally wounded. Perhaps we may all lie under a mistake, in which passion will only entangle us the more, and which will be explained only by calm investigation. Rhodiska, do you first relate to the company, by what means you became possessed of the child whom you have put out to nurse, and who, I presume, is the same that this lady complains of having been taken from her." Rhodiska related the adventure, and caused Zokalef and Dorothea to bring the basket with the address, and the ticket which was pinned

pinned on the child's breast, to corroborate what she said. She also gave an account of what had happened on her opening the trunk. After she had ended her narrative, Rosomaski began his, and produced the letter which had so violently agitated his breast, and nearly proved fatal to the lives of Rhodiska and Mr. Vendost.

Mrs. Vendost and her escort heard, with the utmost astonishment, this surprising train of mysterious villainy. They owned, that this adventure demonstrated that revenge knew how to direct its batteries, so as to give to the brightest innocence the appearance of the deepest shades of guilt. After Rosomaski had ordered that the infant Vendost should be immediately sent for, he told Mrs. Vendost, that she ought to be convinced that neither himself nor his wife were the authors of this affair; and desired that she would inform them in what manner this event had been brought about, which had proved a common

mon source of affliction and anguish to both parties. Mrs. Vendost satisfied them in these words :

“ We reside in the town of Jaroslow, which is at the distance of about thirty leagues from this place. My mother, who lives in a village on this side of Cracow, having written to me that she was dangerously ill, and wished to see me before she died, myself and my husband set out to acquit ourselves of so sacred a duty, taking our infant with us. After having travelled about twenty-seven leagues, we arrived at a place where the road lay between a lofty mountain, which overhung it on one side, and a steep and long descent on the other side. This passage was so narrow, that it would have been excessively hazardous not to have alighted from the carriage. We did so, and the coachman quitted his box and walked before the horses, which he held by the reins. We followed, at some distance behind. Mr. Vendost carried my son on his left arm, and

and I held by his right. I saw him make a gesture which indicated disquietude ; for, undoubtedly you must have perceived that he is deaf and dumb. I watched the direction of his eyes, and saw that they were turned towards the lower part of the mountain, which was covered with a thick underwood. I looked towards the same spot, and beheld three men, habited as woodcutters, who came out of a thick covert, and advanced towards us. I heard them say, ‘ Here’s just what we want.’ There was no escape for us ; so that they soon came up, and two of them seized Mr. Vendost and my son, whilst the third laid hold of me, and kept me fast in his arms. He placed one hand over my eyes, which prevented my seeing any thing more that passed. All my blood seemed to rush towards my heart, as my ears were assailed with the lamentable cries of Mr. Vendost. Shortly afterwards, the person who held me let me go, and ran off. He crossed the road, and descended the precipice by sliding,

sliding, and laying hold of the wild shrubs which covered the descent. He disappeared in an instant under the thickets, which formed a sort of covered way. As Mr. Vendost and my son had also disappeared, I had no doubt but that they had been dragged into this abyss. I deliberated a moment, whether I had best to descend, or to continue my route, and get assistance; but grief and fear had quite unnerved me. My legs could no longer support me, my knees gave way, and I fell in the middle of the road. Some minutes afterwards, I was raised by my coachman, who, after having got through the defile, had stopped the carriage, and not seeing us, had returned to find us. The rattling of the carriage, and the distance he was from us, had prevented his hearing the cries of Mr. Vendost. He was struck with horror and astonishment at the dreadful accident, which had deprived me of a husband and a son. He, however, told me, that our search

would be useless, and that the best way would be, to hasten to our journey's end, whence a proper pursuit might be immediately set on foot after the perpetrators of this horrid action. I pursued his advice, and reached the village in little more than an hour. My two brethren, who had preceded us on a visit to my mother, were surprised to see me come alone; but when I had acquainted them with my misfortune, they swore they would spare neither time, trouble, nor expence, to restore me the objects of my affection, or, at least, to avenge their death. They soon set out with two other young men, who were their friends, and had been prevailed upon to accompany them: you see the whole four here. After an absence of three days, they returned, without having been able to make the least discovery. We were deliberating upon the methods which remained to be taken to find my husband and son, when a person, who went off immediately after he
had

had performed his errand, left at our door an anonymous letter, in the following terms:—

‘MADAME VENDOST,

‘A person, who is much concerned at your late misfortune, informs you, that Mr. Vendost and your son are concealed in the Castle of Vistulof, the proprietor of which is collegued with some of your husband’s relations, who, to enjoy his wealth, have determined to put them out of the way.’

“You may conceive the cruel emotions which the reading of this letter caused me. My brethren and their friends told me, that there was not a minute to be lost; and we all set off together, to rescue my husband and son. We reckoned that we should have to come to blows with assassins, but we have found them in the hands of an

amiable couple, who have suffered no less than ourselves. My joy at seeing them again would have been more pure, if they had not made other victims, and if their sufferings had not been the instruments of yours. Mr. Vendost is now describing what has happened to him since we were separated from each other. Although born deaf and dumb, yet he is passionately fond of study, and may be ranked among the literati of the age; the qualities of his heart and mind are more than sufficient to counterbalance the advantages which nature has withheld from him, and his property is considerable: but I see that he has finished his account."

Mr. Vendost had left off writing, and rose to present what he had written to his wife, that she might read it to the company; but, just as she was about to begin, her son was brought, and she flew to hold him once more in her arms. After having lavished on him all the tokens of maternal fondness, she handed him to Mr. Vendost, who

who seemed tenderly affected, and held him in his arms whilst his wife read the writing, which was as follows:—

“Though destitute of hearing and speech, yet I have been able to comprehend that I find myself here among deliverers, whom secret enemies have wished to stigmatize as robbers and assassins. I can only express my gratitude to them in very imperfect terms: be my interpreter to them, my dear wife, and supply those organs in which I am deficient. You undoubtedly desire to know all that has befallen me since our separation, and you will read here the dreadful recital. When the three banditti, who surprised us on the road, had seized us, one of them bound a bandage close over my eyes: he then took me up in his arms, and threw me over on his back. He crossed my hands on his breast, and tied them together with a running knot. I was fastened again to his shoulders and waist by a cord,

which passed round several times, and of which he held the extremity in his left hand; at least I conjecture so, from what I felt, and from the motion of our descent; for, having been blindfolded, I had no other mode than that of guessing. It appeared to me, that I was carried by a man who possessed more than human strength. As he inclined forwards, and I experienced slight-jerks at each step, I judged that he descended backwards into that deep abyss which we observed on one side of our road. I presumed that his right hand was disengaged, and that he made use of it to lay hold on whatever might support him in his descent. I do not attempt to describe to you, my dear wife, what passed within me during this dreadful scene. I felt myself dragged into the bottom of an abyss; and I was ignorant of your destiny, and that of my son—You may, at least, guess that my sufferings were horrible. After some minutes, it appeared to me, that the bandit who carried me, had ceased to descend, and
that

that he trod on level ground. He continued to walk, as I guessed, about two hours, when he stopped and put me down on the ground, after having loosened the cords which bound me to him: but it was only to replace them by a chain, one end of which embraced my left wrist, and the other was fastened to a stone. By stretching out my right hand, which they had left at liberty, I knew that I was seated on a mat, with my back against a wall, the surface of which was also covered with thick matting. It is impossible for me to say in what kind of place I was. I should have thought myself in a subterranean, if I had not felt the impression of the open air. They had left me no instrument which might serve to file the chain, or to detach the bandage from my eyes—they had plundered me of even my papers. I was reduced to the necessity of waiting with patience my liberty or death, at the caprice of the banditti. Some minutes afterwards, I felt with astonishment that they held a

flaggon, filled with wine, to my mouth. Though I was parched with a most burning thirst, yet I hesitated to taste the liquor which was presented to me; but they forced it down my throat. I was, in like manner, constrained to swallow some food, which was put into my mouth. They then withdrew, after having placed a basket by my side, which contained refreshment. If one can measure time by thought, or rather by the occasions which one has for sleep, five days had elapsed in this manner, when they visited me again, and freed me from my chains; but it was only to prepare new tortures for me. They placed a bandage over my mouth, which was fastened behind, and this addition to my misfortunes appeared insupportable. Whilst one bandage hindered my tears from flowing, another denied a vent to my sighs. They then stretched me out at full length, and inclosed me in the trunk which you see here. I cannot form any idea of the route which they took; only, from the motion of
of

of my prison, I concluded that I was conveyed on the back of a mule. The proprietors of this castle, I presume, have informed my dear wife of every thing which preceded and followed my being liberated from my prison. There remains no more for me, than to express the joy which I now feel. I expected only death; and I behold again the light, my wife, and child. My happiness is now more rapturous than my anguish has been painful."

When the reading of this writing was finished, Mrs. Vendost again embraced her husband and son, and Rosomaski and Rhodiska followed her example. No scene could have been more delightful than that of the mutual transports of those two couple, who, by mutual caresses, congratulated each other on having thus happily arrived at the end of their misfortunes. The bystanders were not unmoved in the midst of this common joy. The friends of

Mr. and Mrs. Vendost congratulated Rosomaski and Rhodiska; and as the little Ladislaus was brought into the room, to receive that nourishment from his mother of which he had been long deprived, he received the caresses of all these new acquaintances. In so doing, every one remarked with surprise, that there was a very striking resemblance between Ladislaus and the son of Mr. Vendost, in age, figure, and countenance.

Night had now begun to resume its empire, and the castle-clock had given notice of it, by striking ten. The two brethren of Mrs. Vendost, and their friends, were impatient to set out on their return home, whence they had been, for several days, absent. They took leave of their host and hostess of Vistulof, mounted their horses, and set off. Mr. and Mrs. Vendost proposed to accompany them; but they dreaded travelling by night, especially after their late misfortune. They accepted the hospitality which the amiable couple of Vistulof

3 offered

offered them, with much politeness, to pass that night and the two succeeding days with them, in order to re-establish their tranquillity. Rosomaski and Rhodiska did all that lay in their power to render their stay agreeable to them. There is nothing which can so soon attach mankind to each other as misfortune. The day following was passed entirely within the walls, in interesting conversation. Mr. Vendost had his pen constantly in his hand, and supplied by writing, which he executed with extreme rapidity, the faculty of speech, which was denied him to express his ideas. Rosomaski protested, that he never could have believed that a person deaf and dumb from his birth, could have been susceptible of so much knowledge. They exhausted themselves in conjectures on the secret causes of the intrigues which had reduced them to so much distress. Mr. and Mrs. Vendost declared, that they knew no person who had any reason to harbour the least germ of hatred towards themselves. Rosomaski

and Rhodiska affirmed, that if any hidden enemy aimed at their destruction, his hatred was unjust ; but that they knew none. Rosomaski ordered the porter to be called, and asked him, if he saw the muleteer again, whether he thought he should know him ?

“ No, Sir,” replied he—“ the instant he told me his errand, I admitted him, without taking any particular notice of him.”

Dorothea and Zokalef were then called, and gave similar answers. During this interrogation, Mrs. Vendost, Rosomaski, and Rhodiska, fixed their eyes on Mr. Vendost, who appeared to write with more than usual earnestness. His wife looked over him, and perceived that he had, that instant, found in one of his pockets a little packet, which merited particular attention. When it was opened, they found in it three superb diamonds not set, and a letter, in the following terms :—

“ Poor

“ Poor Vendost, it is not you at whom the late fatal blow has been aimed ; but he, who has been chosen to be the instrument of punishment to another, has himself much to undergo. Your corporal defects, and the age of your child, are the causes which have drawn on thee this unlucky preference. If money can recompence you for the temporary inconveniencies you must of course suffer, the inclosed jewels will prove more than a counterbalance ; if not, then console yourself that you will no more be made use of, to inflict those torments on the hated proprietors of Vistulof, which they will never cease to endure till death receive them.”

Rosomaski and Rhodiska were astonished to hear such bitter vengeance denounced against themselves, without knowing any reason for its existence. Mr. Vendost again wrote, that he could not think of enriching himself from the misfortunes of others ; and
that

that it was only proper that they, who had been the greatest sufferers, and were still like to be so, should reap good from the harm which was intended them. For his part, he was satisfied to know, that he should suffer no more from the same quarter; and must insist, that the jewels should remain with their hospitable friends of Vistulof.

Mrs. Vendost could not conceal the vexation which this writing occasioned her; and she sufficiently betrayed unequivocal marks of a low origin, and of a narrow uncultivated mind. Rosomaski and Rhodiska, who observed her chagrin, nobly refused the proffered gift; but Mr. Vendost was positive, and it was evident that Mrs. Vendost only gave up the point, because she did not choose to contradict him. From affability, she descended to a petulance of humour, until Rosomaski informed her, that, in order to appear to comply with the wishes of Mr. Vendost, he would accept the jewels, but only as a deposit; and
would

would take care to have them conveyed privately to her, by the first person who should pass through Jaroslow, to whom he thought he could safely confide so valuable a trust. This declaration softened Mrs. Vendost, who began to affect contempt of mercenary views. She even desired Rosomaski and Rhodiska to keep the diamonds, as tokens of the friendship of herself and Mr. Vendost; but Rosomaski refused to accept them on any other terms than those which he himself had proposed. Mrs. Vendost, conceiving she had carried her point; was more civil than ever to her entertainers; but she could not efface the unfavourable opinion which they had imbibed of her.

When the time proposed for the stay of Mr. and Mrs. Vendost had elapsed, they took leave of the hospitable Rosomaski, but in a very different manner. Mr. Vendost quitted them with evident marks of a sincere regret, and Mrs. Vendost with much formality. Rosomaski and Rhodiska
exactly

exactly copied their manners, by bidding a very friendly adieu to Mr. Vendost, and a very ceremonious one to his wife. As they left the gate, Mrs. Vendost said to Rhodiská, " You need not be in any haste to send the jewels; I shall be in no pain about them." Rhodiska instantly perceived the drift of this speech, and only replied by a nod and a smile: of what kind the latter was, may be easily guessed.

Rosomaski and Rhodiska had a short breathing-time from the fury of their insatiate enemy; but they could not forget the vengeance with which he had threatened them, and of which they had already experienced too much, to doubt of his putting his threats into execution. In a short time, they had another cause of alarm, though not of apprehension—Zokalef and Dorothea disappeared after dinner. It was at first concluded, that the evening would bring them back again; but they did not make their appearance.—The next day they were still expected; but in vain. This
sudden

sudden disappearance created suspicions; Rhodiska had even conceived, that there was something odd in Dorothea's drawing her into the tower of the garden of Dorbalec, at the time that she was carried off by Lanfranco's emissaries; but she was unwilling to dismiss her without proofs of her guilt, of which there were none. She thought, however, that she had observed frequent marks of discontent at the kindness which she shewed to Zerbetta. To satisfy Rosomaski, she looked over all her effects, but not the least trifle was missing. "Why," said she, "could Dorothea and Zokalef leave us in this manner? We were no strangers to their attachment to each other; and if they are gone to be married, why not acquaint us with their intentions? we should not have suffered them to depart without some recompence for their long services: they ought to have known us sufficiently, to have been assured of that."

"It is not worth a moment's thought,
much

much less uneasiness," replied Rosomaski—"If they have chosen to depart without giving us an opportunity of evincing our liberality, it is their fault, not ours—If they have been treacherous, it is a happy riddance for us."

After three days had passed without hearing any thing about them, Rosomaski desired Irvan to inquire among the tenants, for two honest industrious persons to supply their place, to whom every encouragement should be given, and he soon succeeded.

Tranquillity did not long together take up its residence within the walls of Vistulof. One morning early, the person who had been intrusted with the charge of the Castle of Dorbalec, came to Vistulof, and bore the melancholy news, that, on the preceding midnight, a dreadful fire had broken out at Dorbalec, which had nearly consumed all but the bare walls, and that no one could give the least conjecture how it happened.

"Alas!"

"Alas!" cried Rhodiska, "is the residence of my ancestors for generations, is the delightful scene of all my youthful pleasures, destroyed?—Cruel enemy!"

"I rather think," replied Rosomaski, "that the fire must have happened through accident than design. The shafts of our secret foe are levelled against our persons, and he would have fired this castle rather than that of Dorbalec, in the hopes of destroying us. But do not grieve: as only the interior of the castle is consumed, it will not be very expensive to reinstate it. Our income is much larger than our expenditure, and we have now more than enough to defray the expence. I will desire Ludowico to return with the messenger, and get some proper person to estimate what it will cost, and what will be the speediest means of restoring Dorbalec to its former state."

Ludowico was no sooner acquainted with Rosomaski's wish, than he departed with the messenger, grieved to the heart at this

new

new misfortune, and not expecting that, on his return, he should find them overwhelmed with one still more extraordinary and dreadful.

At night, as he was sitting alone with Rhodiska, in the absence of Zerbetta, who was gone to put the children to rest, they were suddenly alarmed by the sounds of horses' feet in the front of the castle. "Ah!" cried Rhodiska, turning pale as ashes, "here is some new misfortune. We expect no friend—it is too late an hour for visiting. Fly, Rosomaski, from this new snare of your enemy, and leave me to take care of the children!"

"Can you think," replied Rosomaski, "that I would not prefer instant death to the flying from you and them? I may be unhappy, but I am innocent; and will perish before I suffer myself to be driven from home."

They then began to listen in the most dreadful suspense, and presently heard these words—"Let some of you surround
the

the castle on all sides—Do you remain at this entrance.” Shortly after, the door of the room where they were sitting was opened, and they beheld seven soldiers armed with muskets and fixed bayonets, who formed the guard of a person cloathed in black, and whom they judged to be an agent of the police.

“I summon you, in the name of the magistrates of Zabno,” said the last person, “to give me instantly the key of your cabinet, and that of your writing-desk. You shall not be treated with rigor, if you shew a ready compliance. I already know my way to the chamber, which I am directed to search.”

He then produced to the astonished Rosomaski and Rhodiska, the authority under which he acted, which was under the signature of the principal magistrates of Zabno. Rosomaski then made no difficulty of giving up the keys which were demanded.

“Follow us,” said the officer.

He then went up stairs to the cabinet,
accompanied

accompanied by this unfortunate couple and four of the soldiers, the rest having been ordered to remain below. He unlocked the writing-desk, and, without hesitation, opened the drawer which contained the jewels left in trust by Mrs. Vendost. The officer took them in his hand, examined them, and presently knew them to be the same as he had been directed to search for.

“These jewels,” said he, “are a proof of the horrible crime with which the proprietors of this castle are accused.”

“Of what crime are we accused?” said Rosomaski.

“Let them name it,” cried Rhodiska, “and we shall be able, with a single word, to confound the vile calumniator who has denounced us.”

“Do not hope,” said the officer, “to impose on me, by affecting surprise and candour: your crime is already half proved, and all appearances make me believe that it will be wholly so in a short time.—

Come,”

Come," added he, speaking to the soldiers, "let us carry our researches into the subterraneous apartments."

"What is to be the end of these strange researches?" cried Rosomaski, with a noble boldness—"Am I threatened with some new machination? They may calumniate us—persecute us—but they shall not vilify us."

"Yes," added Rhodiska, "the plots of the wicked may destroy our peace and happiness, but they shall not rob us of our innocence."

"I am not your judge," replied the officer—"my business is only to verify the facts which are alledged against you. You will justify yourselves, if you shall be able, before the tribunal of Zabno. For the present, you must descend with me into the subterraneans."

When they had descended the last flight of steps, and opened the first door, they entered a spacious cavern. The police-officer and the soldiers admired the bold-

ness

ness of the arch, which appeared suspended over their heads, and supported the enormous load above. They listened with astonishment to the sounds of their voices and of their footsteps, which were multiplied by innumerable echoes. Though they had been fully apprized of these circumstances beforehand, though they were men very little susceptible of fear, yet they could not help feeling something like awe at the profound obscurity which reigned in this cavern. The darkness was so palpable, that the light of the torches which guided their march, could scarcely pierce through it.

“It is not here,” said the officer of police, “that the proof of the crime is concealed—we must go farther.”

He then approached a large arched passage with his soldiers, still accompanied by Rosomaski, and Rhodiska holding by his arm: the latter, in spite of her endeavours, could not avoid letting some signs of anxiety escape her. They all passed under

under the center of the arch, and entered a cavern still more spacious than the former, which had numerous communications with other caverns, all of the same construction. It resembled those subterranean churches, which are divided into large compartments by massy pillars, whose upper extremities embrace, and round into arches.

When they arrived at a certain spot, the officer of police suddenly stopped, and said to the soldiers—

“ Remove that large flat stone, and you will discover a trap-door, which you must raise.”

The order was no sooner obeyed, than they perceived a flight of steps, hewn out of the solid rock.

“ This is the first moment,” cried Rosomaski, “ that ever I was aware of the existence of this trap-door. I have been but a short time proprietor of the castle; and the late proprietor left it before I took possession, without giving me any infor-

mation whatever. You see that the iron ring, which serves to raise this trap, was so well concealed under this flat stone, that it would have been almost impossible to suspect the existence of it, without some previous information."

"All that you can say," replied the officer of police, "will make very little impression on me. Words will not justify you, if your actions speak against you. Come on, soldiers, let us descend."

At the bottom of the staircase, which consisted of about thirty steps, they found a second subterranean, whose dimensions and form exactly resembled those of the one above. At this discovery Rosomaski and Rhodiska were struck with astonishment; but they dissembled their concern, lest it should be attributed to fear or remorse, and increase the suspicion of their guilt. The officer of police walked before to one of the extremities of the subterranean, and Rosomaski, Rhodiska, and the soldiers, followed in silent expectation.

"Soldiers,"

“Soldiers,” said the officer of police, “you see another staircase; we must again descend.”

He himself set the example, and all the rest followed it. It led them into a little narrow cave.

“Merciful Heaven!” cried Rhodiska—“what do I see? Here is the fatal trunk, which has already caused us so much anguish, and which we have never missed.—Perfidious Dorothea! Treacherous Zokalef!”

“Here,” cried the officer, “is the last stage of our researches. This trunk contains the last proof of your guilt, or will acquit you.”

As he spoke, he lifted up the lid of the trunk, which was not fastened, and instantly exclaimed—

“Soldiers, behold, and tremble! This dreadful crime, of which one would scarcely think human nature capable, is fully proved.—This trunk contains the corpse of a young female!”

CHAP. XI.

SURPRISE and horror seized all those who heard this dreadful exclamation. They advanced to look into the trunk, and saw it verified.

“Heaven protect us!” cried Rhodiska—
“they have sworn our destruction. What an abominable plot!”

“At least acquaint us,” said Rosomaski, “with the circumstances of the crime with which we are charged, and the name of our accuser.”

“No one, I believe,” said the officer of police, “can be better acquainted with
the

the particulars of this horrid affair than yourselves."

"We are innocent, however!" cried Rosomaski and Rhodiska both at once.

"Innocent!" said the officer—"have you not poisoned this young woman, whom you have decoyed into your castle, for the purpose of plundering her of her jewels? Your denying it will not pass upon me. The diamonds, which I have just secured; this trunk, on which I behold, at this moment, the address of the Countess Rosomaski; the linen, which envelopes this unfortunate female, and which bears the initials of your names—all combine to bespeak you guilty."

"I have not the least apprehensions about the event," replied Rosomaski, with a calmness which astonished Rhodiska—"We can readily account for the manner in which the diamonds came into our possession; and, one link of this accursed combination being broken, the whole

M 3

chain

chain must fall to pieces. Bring us now face to face with our accuser, and we shall easily confound him."

"Your accuser is unknown to me," replied the officer—"but what has been alleged against you, appears to be founded on undeniable fact. We have not been sent here to seek after a Will-o'-the-Wisp. Soldiers, perform the last part of your duty; bind them and conduct them to prison."

Rosomaski was ready to burst with indignation at the sight of cords and chains: he intreated that, if they were determined to put so great an indignity upon himself, they would at least have some consideration for the female sex, and leave his wife at liberty.

"Soldiers, do your duty instantly!" cried the officer.

As they were obeying his orders—

"O heavens!" cried Rhodiska, "must we be treated like vile malefactors, like murderers!"

murderers! If you die, my dear Rosomaski, at least I shall have the consolation of bearing you company."

"Dearest Rhodiska," replied Rosomaski, "calm your fears. Heaven will never suffer innocence to be confounded with guilt."

"Come, soldiers," said the officer of police, "take up that trunk, and let us conduct the victim and her murderers to Zabno, where the magistrates are waiting to enter into a closer examination of the prisoners."

The four soldiers instantly took each a corner of the trunk, and lifted it upon their shoulders: they then quitted the subterraneans, and returned to the hall. The officer of police then ordered the horses to be harnessed to Rosomaski's chaise, and a litter was found to convey the trunk and its contents to Zabno.

Whilst this was doing, Rhodiska intreated, with a tone which would have melted apathy into compassion, that they would permit her to send for her children,

to embrace them before she was carried off, and to give some instructions relating to them: even the officers and soldiers seemed inclined to grant her this request; but the former replied, that his orders were peremptory not to suffer them to speak to any one besides himself, if he should discover any proofs of guilt.

Rosomaski and Rhodiska were then escorted to the chaise, and the officer of police got in with them, to prevent them from having any secret communication, and concerting their defence before their examination, which was to take place at Zabno. The fatal trunk was placed on the litter, and the soldiers mounted, and surrounded the chaise, in which were the prisoners. The procession then moved on towards Zabno, which was about three leagues distant. As they were on the road, Rhodiska, after ruminating on the event of this terrible accusation, cried out—

“ Ah ! my dear Rosomaski, you thought nothing of the disappearance of Dorothea
and

and Zokalef; but I presaged that we should derive some new misfortune from it. Their treacherous hands must have conveyed this fatal trunk to the cave."

"Silence, Madam!" cried the officer—"I am to permit no conversation on this affair. Speak on any other subject as much as you please; but, if you utter another word on this, I must separate you, and cause your husband to go to Zabno on foot."

Rhodiska could no longer refrain from bursting into tears; and she looked at Rosomaski, and he at her, with eyes so tender and expressive, that they could not help perceiving, that each was infinitely more affected by the sufferings of the other, than by their own personal fears.

On their arrival at the town of Zabno, the procession did not halt till it arrived at the gate of the prison. At that time, night had replaced the day, and the sonorous clock of that gloomy receptacle for malefactors struck nine. Rosomaski and Rho-

diska were conducted into the gaoler's room, whilst separate cells were preparing for them. All their sufferings hitherto were nothing, compared with what they experienced when they were informed, that they were to be separated from each other. Rhodiska, whose hands had not been fettered, threw her arms round the neck of Rosomaski, and held him so closely embraced, that force alone could tear them from each other. The gaoler's assistants loosened his hands, and began to pull Rosomaski away ; but Rhodiska seized his clothes, and was dragged some paces on the ground after him, before her hands could be again loosened. She then sunk into insensibility, and, in that state, was conveyed to the cell, and placed on a miserable bed, which had been prepared for her reception.

The pangs which rent the labouring bosom of Rosomaski, were no less severe. The instant in which he had been separated from his Rhodiska, he thought he had lost
the

the vital principle, or spring of life.— Stretched on the straw, which covered the floor of his dungeon, he bewailed his unhappy lot ; but his greatest affliction arose from his being unable to repose his grief in the bosom of his Rhodiska, who would have found consolation in being near him.

Whilst Rosomaski and Rhodiska were thus abandoning themselves to the most distressing reflections, the officer of the police was preparing further proofs of the crime of which they already appeared convicted. The corpse of the female was carried to the anatomical hall, in order to ascertain, by dissection, whether the deceased had ended her days by poison or not. The body was taken out of the trunk in its envelope, and placed on a table standing in the midst of the hall, which was lighted by several chandeliers. Whether from the lateness of the hour, or from the secrecy which had been used by the police, lest the accused persons should escape, the hall,

M. 6

although

although a public place, and open to the public on all similar occasions, contained only one person, who was a stranger, besides the anatomist, his assistant, and the officer of the police. The anatomist then uncovered the face of the deceased, and was struck with admiration at its youth and beauty.

“What a pity!” exclaimed he—“This woman is still beautiful in the arms of death. She could hardly have seen sixteen summers.”

The officer of the police, whom nothing could touch, cried out—“Our present business is not to admire an inanimate body—we want to know, whether this female died by poison or not? It grows late, we have had a long journey, and want to go to rest—Take your instruments, and go on with your examination.”

The operator, who did not wish to risk the displeasure of the officer of police, in whose power it lay to do him a disservice
with

with the tribunal of Zabno, immediately looked out his instruments, and approached the table.

“ Stop !” cried the stranger, who had been attentively examining and feeling the face of the deceased ; “ this female has nothing of the livid hue of death : her insensibility may be only the effect of a lethargy : you should be assured that she is dead, before your instruments prevent all hopes of resuscitation. The man who would destroy a fellow-creature, to indulge himself an hour sooner in sleep, ought never to wake again.”

The officer of police no sooner perceived that this keen apostrophe was levelled at himself, than he taxed the stranger with impertinence, and threatened that, if he again insulted justice in his person, he would order him to be turned out of doors.

“ If you put your threat into execution,” replied the stranger, “ I will instantly
alarm

alarm the magistrates and people of Zabno, and give them to understand with how little humanity you execute your office. Not only the lives of the accused, but, I have reason to think, that of this apparently deceased person, depend on the present investigation; and I charge you to try the means of recovery before you proceed any further. If, on feeling the pains you are about to inflict upon her so precipitately, she give signs of life, remember you are the murderer."

The undaunted tone in which the stranger spoke, made the police officer imagine that he was of a superior rank. He replied, that he would wait with patience till every effort should be made to convince so incredulous a person, that for once he had been deceived.

The operator ordered his assistant to bring him a looking-glass, which he placed before the lips of the female, and observed, with astonishment, that the glass was tarnished.

nished. "Can it be possible?" cried he—"this woman still preserves some remains of life!"

He then procured a feather, which he dipped into some spirituous liquor, and pushed up one of her nostrils, which instantly caused a contraction of the muscles of that part of the face. The operator declared, that there were still hopes of returning life. He was assured of it, when, on opening one of her eyes, he observed that it was bright, and as prominent as ever. All the usual methods, in such cases, were then successively put into practice; and, in less than half an hour, the patient opened her eyes, and endeavoured to raise her languid head.

The operator, who was naturally humane, and would, if he had not been intimidated by the police officer, perhaps have readily attended to the suggestion of the stranger, then declared, that the greatest danger was to be apprehended from the patient's fright, if she should, on recovering
ing

ing her senses, perceive herself in such a situation, and surrounded by unknown persons, of whom not one was of her own sex. She was, therefore, immediately conveyed to the bed of the assistant, who slept in an adjoining room to the hall, and joyfully gave it for the occasion. An elderly matron, who had the care of the hall, was called to give her assistance; and, at the end of another hour, the surgeon sent to inform the officer and the stranger, who waited the event in the hall, that the patient had recovered her senses, and the use of her speech. They immediately entered the apartment; and, after the officer had assured her that she was among friends, and had nothing to fear, he asked her what was her name, and where was her place of abode?

“Have a little patience,” replied she—
“my memory is returning, and I shall shortly be able to give you an account of what has happened to me.”

After an interval, during which they administered

ministered to her some restoratives, and appeared to compose her mind, by repeated assurances that she was in perfect safety, with those who would restore her to her friends, she desired to know where she was, and what had happened to her since she had lost her recollection? The worthy anatomist informed her, in the most cautious terms, to avoid giving her any shock, that she had been found in the Castle of Vistulof, the proprietors of which had been accused of having poisoned her.

“ They are innocent !” replied she, with much animation.

“ Take notice of that, Mr. Officer,” said the stranger.

“ You have not been poisoned then ?” said the anatomist.

“ Yes, I have been.”

“ Who then has put you into the state from which we have delivered you ?”

“ I feel too weak to enter into all these details: at present, be satisfied with knowing, that I am named Theresia Dauvernop,
that

that I reside at Cracow, and that the fatal draught was administered, Heaven forgive me! with my own guilty hand."

The stranger made the officer of police set down these answers, and requested the anatomist, his assistant, and the keeper of the hall, to sign them, which they readily complied with.

The anatomist then declared that the patient wanted rest, and the officer would not press her to enter into any further explanations at that time.

"Madam," said the officer, "I am hardened only against the guilty, or such as I suspect to be so; but I am compassionate to the unfortunate. Compose yourself here to-night, and to-morrow I offer you an asylum at my house, where my wife will pay you every attention, till the time comes to restore you to your friends."

All the company then left the room except the hall-keeper, who sat up with Theresia the whole night, during which she slept soundly, probably because the effects

effects of the draught were not yet worn off. The hall-keeper, however, roused her at intervals, under pretence of giving her some restoratives, as she had been directed by the surgeon to do, if the patient slept too soundly.

The next morning, Theresia was pretty well recovered; and, after having breakfasted with the hall-keeper, a chaise arrived at the door, in which was the police officer's wife, who came to take her home with her. Theresia expressed her gratitude to the hall-keeper, and her mortification that she had nothing about her to recompense her for the trouble she had taken on her account; but she promised, that her friends would not forget her. She then entered the chaise, and was politely received by the officer's wife, who ordered the coachman to return to her house, which was situated at the other end of the town. Theresia no sooner got out of the chaise, than she intreated the officer not to lose a minute in exculpating the innocent persons,

sons, whom her own guilt had involved in so much distress. She declared, she should never enjoy a moment's ease till she was informed they had been liberated.

"The forms of justice must be gone through," replied the officer—"but your declaration of their innocence has already softened the rigors of their confinement. In order to effect their deliverance, you must give me an account of your being in such a situation, which is all that is now wanting to complete my final report, previously to its being given to the magistrates. The result will be, the immediate discharge of the accused persons."

"That no time may be lost then," said Theresia, "you shall have that extraordinary account immediately."

CHAP. XII.

* I AM the daughter of Major Dauvernop, formerly of Cracow, who died in the service of his country when I was a child. Scarcely had I attained my tenth year, before my mother introduced to me, as a companion, the young Zedeo Darnim, who was the son of the Governor of the Citadel of Cracow, and then about a year older than myself: she bade me call him my little husband.

“ I know not by what instinct, but, from that very moment, I had a sort of antipathy towards all children who were not of my own sex. I could not endure to be alone

alone with Zedeo, much less to join with him in youthful diversions: I rather believe, that his presence was so much the more hateful to me, as I thought I perceived, that he himself was not held to me by any inclination, but solely through the orders of Colonel Darnim. When I had nearly attained my fifteenth year, my mother declared to me, that my father had betrothed me to the son of Colonel Darnim, and that I must look upon Zedeo as my future husband. She then acquainted me with the origin of what I regarded as an insupportable misfortune, and an unjust oppression. There had, from their youth, existed between my father and Colonel Darnim, who were early in life commissioned in the same regiment, the strictest friendship: they had made the same campaigns, and were present at the same battles and the same sieges. They wished, by this marriage of their children, to erect a sort of monument to the friendship which had existed between their fathers.

“ Whether there was between us some secret principle of a natural antipathy, or Heaven thought proper to interpose, and frustrate the intentions of those who would circumscribe its decrees, our parents could never make the sentiment, which they wished to raise in our hearts, take root: perhaps the rigorous treatment, of which we were at once the cause and the object, had made us the more dislike each other. In vain did our parents make efforts to subdue the invincible aversion which we discovered. As for myself, I could never love Zedeo, although he was thought handsome; and whether it was really the case, or the persecution, which I daily suffered on the account of Zedeo, only made me imagine so, by degrees the antipathy, with which Zedeo inspired me, appeared to me to extend to all the individuals of his sex—The idea of marriage was hateful to me.

“ Notwithstanding the opposition which I made to the will of my mother, she did not renounce her project of fulfilling the will

will of Major Dauvernop. She regarded the accomplishment of the last wishes of her husband, whom she passionately loved, and who had been snatched from her at an age when men are most amiable, as a religious duty.

“When I had attained my sixteenth year, my mother told me, in an imperative tone, that she knew how to compel me to marry the young Zedeo. I answered, that no human force should make me consent to give my hand to him, or any other man, against my inclination. She reproached me in the harshest terms, with outraging the manes of my father, by refusing the husband whom he had destined for me.

“I was little moved at the reprimands and menaces of my mother, who even carried the matter so far, as to vent the most direful imprecations against me. I retired to my apartment, to withdraw myself from her anger.

“Some time after, she renewed her proposals; but, at this time, she constrained herself

herself to speak to me with a tone of gentleness. I listened attentively to what she said. She told me, that a more suitable match than that with Zedeo, could not be found for me, as we were both nearly of an age, and had each a considerable fortune. She added, that parents sometimes saw themselves under a necessity of opposing the inclinations of their children, to render them happy; and that we should be scarcely united to each other, before we should both applaud a marriage for which we now testified repugnance; because, at our age, we were incapable of discerning our true inclinations. I answered her by a positive refusal, which, however, I endeavoured to soften, that I might wear the appearance of as much moderation as herself. But her redness, and her forced demeanour, evinced sufficiently that she did herself a violence; and that, at the bottom of her heart, she was transported with rage and vexation.

“A week after, she again demanded if

I would yet consent to fulfil the intentions of Major Dauvernop? I declared, that I still persisted in my refusal, convinced that, by abstaining from accomplishing the indiscreet wish of my father, I did by no means violate the respect due to his memory. My answer was the signal for a new scene. Unable any longer to stifle the explosion of her discontent, she gave the reins to her anger; and forgot herself so far as to strike me. I left her hastily; she pursued me, and I should have found a difficulty in freeing myself from her excesses, if I had not found the street-door open, and fled with all my speed.

“ My indignation now knew no bounds, and drove me to the fatal resolution, which plunged me into the dreadful situation in which you beheld me, and which has caused such dreadful anxiety to an innocent couple. I had no thoughts of taking away my life, till I passed the door of an apothecary. I felt a sudden impulse, and obeyed it without reflection. I entered, and asked for
some

some laudanum. Whether from the distracted air which I must have worn, or from the apothecary's humane caution, I cannot say, but, from what has happened, there is no doubt but that he took care the dose which he gave me should not be fatal to life. My heart was elated, when I had in my possession what I looked upon as a certain cure for all my sufferings; but I resolved not to make use of it, unless upon the greatest emergency. I concealed it carefully about my clothes, and returned home with a composure which surprised my mother, and indeed myself.

“The next day, my mother appeared to repent the impetuous sallies to which she had given way. She no longer spoke to me of Zedeo, nor of the will of my father, nor of the marriage which caused me so great a terror; but the coldness of her manner, and her gloomy air, did not permit me to doubt that she still continued to be irritated against me. However, as none of her discourse tended towards the

projected union, I thought there might be reason for me to hope that she had totally abandoned it. There were about fifteen days that I enjoyed an appearance of a calm; at the end of which, my mother proposed to me to accompany her on a visit, which she told me she was going to pay to one of her friends, who lived in the country. As I could not refuse her with a good grace, I went with her into the carriage. We went without the walls of Cracow, and, after a journey of about seven or eight leagues, I perceived that the carriage entered under a large portico, which served as an entrance to several wings of a building, whose exterior resembled an assemblage of large and lofty edifices.

“ The carriage stopped in the midst of a spacious area. The door was opened, and I alighted first; when I heard my mother say, in a loud tone of voice, ‘ Here’s the young person whom you expect.’ Those words caused a sudden terror, which increased,

creased, when I found myself rather rudely seized by two women clothed in white, and saw the carriage drive off with my mother, at full gallop. I followed it with my eyes, uttering, at the same time, the most piercing cries. Instantly I was no longer at a loss to guess in what sort of a house I was left. As I cast my eyes round the buildings which surrounded the area, I remarked, that all the windows were secured with iron bars, and I read on the top of the portico these shocking words—*Convent for Penitent Females.*

“ I was instantly forced into the great hall, where I beheld an old and wrinkled devotee, whose gloomy looks perfectly corresponded with the appearance of the abode. From the respect which several other recluses paid her, I judged that she was the Superior of the convent. She said to me, in a snuffing tone—

‘ Thank Heaven, my child, for having conducted you to this asylum. You will find here the means of making your peace

with Heaven, and of repairing the faults which you have committed. You have driven your mother to solicit from the government, an order to shut you up here for the remainder of your days. Do not regret the world ; it is happy for you that you have quitted it. You are arrived in a safe port. Do not be afflicted at the idea of being destined to live here perpetually : if you love work and prayer, if you are humble and submissive, you will meet with mild usage ; otherwise, you will be treated with severity. We know how to subdue the most untractable dispositions. You are going to be dressed in the habit of the novices ; and if, in the end, you prove yourself one of the chosen, you may be admitted to the rank of a nun.'

" This strange harangue shocked, instead of consoling me. I shed a torrent of tears, and intreated the Superior to inform me, what grievous offences had drawn upon me the cruel punishment of being immured during life ? She answered, that she had no
time

time to enter into particulars, and had nothing more to say to me. The two women, who had brought me into the audience-hall of the Superior, then conducted me to a little cell, where they left me some time, a prey to my melancholy reflections. They returned, bringing with them all the articles of dress of a novice, and began to substitute them in the place of my former habiliments. Unhappily, I had the address to secure my bottle of laudanum:

“ After they had finished this task, they introduced me into an immense hall, where I beheld more than two hundred novices seated on benches, and occupied in needle-work, and other feminine employments. Some were sewing, tambouring, and embroidering; others spinning wool; flax, or cotton: most of them had their eyes cast down, and the outward appearance of humility. Ten nuns, ranged at intervals, and armed with rods of discipline, looked round with a scrutinizing eye, and, with severe looks, commanded work and silence. As

soon as they saw me appear, they marked out a place for me, and presented me with a distaff and spindle. I sat down, but I felt such a depression of spirits, that I found it impossible to work. One of the nuns perceived it, and came and cuffed me severely.

“ The supper hour being come, we all went to the refectory. Roots, and bread, and water, composed all the articles of our repast. The same silence reigned during supper : it was not interrupted but by some devotional-lecture, which one of the nuns gave with a loud voice. After the repast, we were permitted half an hour’s recreation. Pastime and conversation filled up this interval ; but the novices were forbidden to whisper, or to enter into any kind of confidential discourse. They were certain of not being able to say any thing which would not be overheard by the nuns, who were continually passing and repassing between us. I was not tempted to take a part in the relaxations of my companions :
seated

seated in one corner of the hall, with my head reclining on my hands, I reflected on my afflicting situation, and wept in silence. My companions approached me from time to time, and offered to console me; but I intreated them to take no notice of me. What affected me most painfully was, to think that, though innocent and pure, I was confounded with women who, for the greater part, had, by their weaknesses or their licentiousness, tarnished their reputations. At length the convent clock sounded for evening prayer: all the novices ranged in a circle, and threw themselves on their knees. I could not witness, without great emotion, the contrite and penitent air of the greater part of my companions, who, bent towards the ground, and praying with fervour, seemed to wish to hide their foreheads in the dust, at the remembrance of their failings.

“ When the prayer was ended, each novice retired to her cell. I panted for the moment of being left to myself. When

the nun, to whose superintendence I was entrusted, had carried away the light, and locked the door of my cell, I renewed my reflections on my situation. I could not restrain my sobs, by thinking that my conduct was irreproachable, and that my mother had, notwithstanding, inflicted on me a chastisement, which was due only to the most guilty excesses.

‘Am I condemned then,’ said I, ‘to languish all my life in this abode of affliction? What a hideous perspective! Grief will undoubtedly soon terminate my days. I sink under my misery.’

“Here I made so loud an exclamation, that the nun who stood guard in the passage overheard me, and bade me be silent. Then I confined myself to low murmuring complaints, and passed the whole night in this painful agitation.

“When the break of day appeared, the matin bell filled the air with its doleful chimes, to which succeeded the harsh croaking of the rattle, which a nun turned rapidly,

rapidly, as she walked hastily through the galleries. I rose as mournfully as I had lain down. Prayer and spinning filled up the whole of the morning, except a very short interval, which was dedicated to what they called breakfast, but which was as frugal as the supper. We then returned to work, which occupied us till dinner, which exactly resembled the supper; and, after it, we were, in like manner, allowed half an hour's recreation, in a back yard devoted to that purpose. We again entered the hall after it was expired, to remain till the supper hour came round again.

“ I was too heart-broken to be able to work like the rest; and I could not finish the task which had been allotted to me, for which the superintendant nun gave me a severe reprimand. The day after, I did not work with more activity, and I was again scolded. I answered in a tone which expressed my indignation.

‘ Let her be punished!’ cried the nun, who presided over the hall of work.

“ That instant, two of the sisterhood stripped me, and bestowed on my shoulders twenty stripes, with the rod of discipline. I exclaimed against such unworthy treatment; and all my companions, affrighted, forgot to turn their spindles. Presently the accents of menace recalled them to their labours, but their humid and downcast eyes discovered their inward pangs. One of them especially testified her compassion in a more open manner: she was the novice who always sat at my right hand in the work-room. Her physiognomy was mild and interesting, and she wore an air of melancholy, which touched the very soul. At the first sound of the rod of discipline, she cried out, ‘ Injustice!’ and that single word had nearly made her a partaker of my punishment. When I returned to my seat, she regarded me with a look full of compassion. I felt my heart yearn towards her—I longed to make her my friend and confidante; but the rigid silence which was prescribed us, did not permit

permit us to use any other language than that of the eyes.

“Scenes much less violent would have sufficed to make me abhor this abode. I fell into a deep melancholy. I had found some little consolation in the presence of the interesting novice who worked beside me: the few words which she addressed to me, made me judge of the extent of her amiable qualities—but this comfort was denied me. They replaced her by another female, whose harsh and austere looks disgusted me, and made me the more regret the companion whom I had lost. I no longer saw my friend, but in the intervals of recreation; which, besides being short, were continually interrupted by the impertinent intrusion of the nuns, who would not suffer us to discourse at liberty. Nevertheless, I gathered enough to give me to understand, that an unfortunate attachment was the cause of all her sufferings. Both of us, one day, impelled by a desire to bestow our confidence on each other, quitted,

quitted, by stealth, the place where the novices assembled to recreate themselves, and retired secretly into a lone chamber. There we related to each other, all the events which had preceded our entrance into the convent. Her history was in every respect similar to mine, except that her aversion for the man who was proposed to her, originated in her attachment to another; whilst my refusal had proceeded only from an antipathy to marriage, and particularly to Zedeo. She abhorred, as much as myself, the monastery in which we were confined, and the kind of life to which we were obliged to submit. The similitude of our misfortunes rivetted the connection which had commenced between us, and rendered our conversation excessively interesting.

“ When it was over, we went to rejoin our companions; but the summons to the work-room had been long given. We were obliged to endure the harshest reprimands, for our obstinacy and disobedience. My sufferings

sufferings had so far soured my temper, that I could not forbear from giving vent to a bitter philippic against the tyrannical proceedings of the monastery, and the minute rigor of the sisterhood. My observations appeared like blasphemies, and I was condemned to pass four days in the *Chamber of Discipline*. They gave this appellation to a spacious hall in the attic story of the building, which was lighted only by trap-doors in the cieling. It was divided into several boxes by bars of wood, which formed a sort of partition. I was inclosed in one of those mournful abodes, several of which were occupied by other novices. I could perceive their dejected looks, and hear their lamentations. This distracting picture increased my own agony. My gaoleress opened the wicket, and handed a psalm-book, pointing out those which I should be expected to have got by heart on the next day. This was not all: she presented me with a distaff, and marked the task which I was to finish within the same

same time. I could not help complaining loudly of the barbarous usage which they heaped upon me. She affected to think herself insulted, called the disciplinarian, and made her give me twenty stripes.

“ Groaning with pain and indignation, I cursed this horrible convent; and I have no doubt, that, if I had had it in my power to have avenged myself, those merciless devotees would have paid dearly for the pangs which I suffered. The next day, my gaoleress came to call me to an account; but I had not even begun my task. She instantly gave the signal, and I was seized by two robust sisters, who treated me as on the preceding evening. Those unjust persecutions were not adapted to make me enamoured with work, and the task was again neglected. But, if my hands were unemployed, my imagination was not inactive. I turned over a thousand confused projects: sometimes I thought on the means of making my escape; at others, I entertained a desire of revenging myself
on

on my tormentors : oftentimes, in my delirium, I wished for death. When my gaoleress came the next morning, to find what progress I had made, I could shew her none, and I underwent the usual chastisement. The day after, as it was impossible to work, my neglect drew on me a similar punishment.

“ At length, the term of my confinement arrived, and I left the chamber of discipline ; but I beheld the end of my punishment with indifference. In my eyes, my torments had not ceased, since I was still obliged to live within the walls of the convent, which I detested. My very heart was ulcerated, and the last trial served to put a finishing stroke to my despair. I was led to the chapel, and beheld a coffin, round which they were going to chaunt the funeral service of the dead. A cold tremor came over me, and I approached it with tottering steps. I read on the hearse-cloth the name of my friend. At this fatal sight,

sight, my blood was numbed, and I fainted on the marble floor.

“ They carried me to my cell, and laid me on the bed. When I recovered my senses, I exclaimed—

‘ Miserable Theresia ! dost thou still exist, whilst there is no longer any thing to attach thee to life ? I have no longer any mother, since she deserves not that appellation who has made use of her authority only to persecute me. I have lost my liberty, which is dearer to me than my life : I have lost it for ever, since I am condemned to pass all my life here in the horrors of captivity, without the least hopes of ever quitting this abode of tears. Since I have languished in this premature tomb, I have endured a thousand torments, and there no longer remains but a dreary prospect of suffering more. To be wretched, with the overwhelming certainty of being always so, is a destiny much more frightful than death itself. O spirit of her whose
recent

recent loss rouses my despair to madness ! oh thou, my tender friend, whose remembrance rends my heart, listen to me ! I feel that the last breath of life is about to leave me—a short, short space, and I shall follow thee into the depths of the cave, whither thou hast preceded me. I am not deceived : a chance, conformable to my wishes, presents me with the means of terminating my unhappy fate.’

“ At that instant, I recollected the fatal dose, which I had till then forgotten. I drew out the phial which contained it—I looked at it, but my heart revolted at the idea of self-destruction—I laid it down, and remained in suspense. The ideas of the long punishment, which awaited me in the hateful abode in which I was to pass my days, again revived my disgust at life, which appeared to me as a death, every moment that I existed. The spectre of Despair stalked before me—I again seized the phial, and put it to my lips—I still felt, all through me, a movement of nature, which

which revolted at the act—I got the better of it, and, closing my eyes, I swallowed, with precipitation, the fatal beverage.

‘It is all over then,’ said I—‘death has planted its arrow in my bosom. Nothing remains but to write a note, which may reveal the cause of my despair, and become a monument of caution to those mothers, who would hereafter force the inclination of their daughters.’

“I had inclosed the phial in the case of an *étui*, in the room of a smelling-bottle, which it before contained. The *étui* also contained a silver pen. The blank leaf of a prayer-book served me for paper; but I still wanted ink. I made use of a pin to wound myself in my left arm, and, with the stream, I traced out these words:—

‘Groan, blind and unnatural mother! Tremble, ye barbarous ministers of her guilty rage! Theresia has just ended her days by poison. It is she herself
who

who has prepared the mortal beverage, but you only have pushed her on to this act of desperation.'

"I had scarcely finished, before I heard the door of my cell open. I instantly hid the note in my bosom. 'What are you doing?' cried a nun, who made her appearance. 'Nothing,' replied I, with spirit—'leave me to myself.' 'This is of a piece with your usual impertinence,' said she, as she retired—'but you shall hear from me this evening. Leave us alone to reduce you yet to your proper senses.'

"At this threat I was almost suffocated with indignation. I fell into frightful convulsions, which terminated in a cold shivering. I attributed my condition to the first effects of the poison, when I began to grow weak and drowsy. Although extremely agitated the instant before, yet I soon became motionless. I felt my sight
disordered,

disordered, my respiration hard, and my limbs stiffened: I could no longer keep open my eyelids, and I imagined I was about to sleep the sleep of death: but the end has proved, that the poison had not been sufficiently strong to destroy me, or even to leave any sensible effect; which, as I have already said, I attribute to the preventive caution of the humane apothecary who sold it to me. It is impossible for me to relate to you what followed this rash act; I cannot even guess how, after having, as I supposed I must have, been wrapped in my dress of a novice, put into a coffin, and immured in the cemetery of the convent, I have been found in the deepest cave of the Castle of Vistulof."

"Nor I either," replied the officer of police—"this adventure astonishes me the more, as the Convent of Female Penitents is nearly two leagues distant from the Castle of Vistulof, and it must have been almost impossible to have made such a translation,

translation, without having been seen.—
But I will leave nothing undone, to fathom
the bottom of this shocking mystery.”

CHAP. XIII.

THERESIA had not been able to go through this moving story, without being interrupted several times by tears and sobs. The wife of the police officer had not refrained from a sympathetic overflowing of the eyes, and had conceived a degree of tenderness for this unfortunate female. She endeavoured to console her to the utmost of her power, whilst her husband was gone to give in to the magistrates the account which he had just taken down,
and

and with which he set off as soon as he had reduced it to writing.

The morning's sun had brought into the cell of Rosomaski the feeble light, which served only to render objects just visible.

The anguish which had preyed upon his mind during the whole of the night, had totally driven away sleep and repose. He was waiting in anxious expectation of his fate, when, about noon, the gaoler entered, and ordered him to quit his cell, and follow him. Rosomaski obeyed. The gaoler conducted him into a chamber, which was light, and furnished with every requisite for a parlour. "Wait here," said the gaoler, leaving the room. Rosomaski, astonished, could not penetrate the motives of this conduct; but there was nothing in it to alarm him. He was soon assured, that there had happened an extraordinary change in his affairs. The gaoler returned, accompanied by Rhodiska. "The magistrates," said he, "have ordered that you should have a more commodious room,

room, and that you should be no longer separated."

At these words, Rosomaski and Rhodiska flew into each other's arms, and remained, during some moments, in a close embrace. Even the gaoler,

"Albeit unused to the melting mood,"

seemed moved at their ecstasy. Enraptured at the felicity of again being with each other, they appeared to have almost forgotten that they were still in captivity. Rosomaski enquired of the gaoler, to what happy event he owed this amelioration of his destiny? He answered, that an unknown person had delivered him the order signed by the chief magistrate of Zabno, without giving him the least explanation; that he seemed impatient to be gone again, and had no sooner accomplished his errand, than he was out of sight.

"Who can this humane person be," cried Rhodiska, "who thus interests himself in our fate?"

“ It is not without reason,” replied Rosomaski, “ that we have reckoned on the protection of Heaven : we now experience that it never abandons innocence.”

Six hours had elapsed since Rosomaski and Rhodiska had been introduced to each other. They were enjoying the consolation of a private conversation, when the door suddenly opened, and a voice exclaimed—“ You are free !” It was Ludowico who spoke, and who, in an instant, flew into the arms of his friend.

“ Is it you,” cried Rosomaski, “ who have been our unknown friend, and our deliverer ?”

“ My dearest Rosomaski,” replied Ludowico, “ my efforts to restore you to liberty have only a feeble merit—you owe it to your innocence. But let us leave this place, so unworthy of you : there is your own chaise waiting at the gate, and you are permitted to leave Zabno when you please ; but it will be necessary that you tarry at some inn to-night, to recover your
composure

composure of mind. All is well at home, as I have been this instant informed by Irvan, who is arrived at Zabno, unable any longer to remain at Vistulof in ignorance of your fate : he is at the gate with the chaise."

They all left the prison, and got into the chaise to avoid the eyes of the spectators, who had gathered in numbers to behold the unfortunate couple, whose adventure had, by this time, made a great noise through the town. When they arrived at the inn, Rosomaski again embraced his friend, and desired him to acquaint them how he had been able to prove their innocence, and procure their release so much sooner than the usual forms of justice commonly allowed ?

" When I returned to Vistulof, from viewing the ravages of the fire," replied Ludowico, " I found the castle in the utmost confusion, and could scarcely obtain an answer to all my hasty enquiries into the cause of it. ' My God ! ' cried I,

on the verge of impatience—‘tell me instantly what new misfortune has befallen my friends?’ When I heard the affair, I was seized with rage and indignation, that you should have been so unjustly accused, and ignominiously treated. I instantly remounted my horse, which still remained at the gate, without knowing what I was going to do, only that I was determined to be near you. It was dark when I entered Zabno; but Providence directed that I should pass the door of the public hall, at which I beheld your chaise, and the litter which conveyed the fatal trunk. I was enabled to ascertain that the chaise was yours, because the door was open, as it must be upon all these public occasions, and there was a light in the passage. I instantly ascended the staircase, and beheld the police officer, and the person who was to anatomize the supposed deceased, to discover whether she had died by poison, and his assistant: no other persons were present. The fatal trunk was on the floor,
and

and they were then in the act of taking out the body to place it on the table." Here Ludowico, who was the stranger who had so fortunately interposed to rescue the unfortunate Theresia from a second death, related what had happened.

"I had no sooner," added Ludowico, "seen the unfortunate cause of your sufferings restored beyond the danger of a relapse, and caused the police officer, and all present, to sign her declaration of your innocence, than I flew to the house of the chief magistrate of Zabno, to relate to him the wonderful event which had just proclaimed the innocence of the proprietors of Vistulof. I am ignorant whether he was moved at the pathetic language with which friendship certainly inspired me; but he listened with extreme patience and attention, and answered me with rather more than common civility, that, on the next morning, he would send to the police officer for his report of what had passed; and that he would immediately soften the

rigors of your confinement, if circumstances would permit him so to do. I withdrew, mortified, however, that I could not procure your release that night, and spare you, as well as your beloved Rhodiska, the horror of passing a night in prison.

“ This morning early, I again waited upon the magistrate, who informed me, that, as he had not yet received the report of the police officer, he could take no step in favour of my friends. I then flew to the officer, who informed me, that he should not be able to prepare it in less than an hour. Thinking to pass the tedious interval in consoling you, and giving you notice that your innocence was no longer doubted, I hastened to the prison, and demanded to see you ; but I was informed, that, so far from being permitted to see strangers, you were separated from your wife. I traced back my steps to the house of the police officer, but found he was already gone to the magistrate's. I followed,
and

and intreated the magistrate to grant you a more convenient apartment, and to permit your wife to be with you. It was at that time that he delivered me the order, by virtue of which you were removed to the gaoler's own apartment, and brought together. Not yet contented with this trifling alleviation of your situation, I desired to know why, since your innocence was declared, I might not have an order for your leaving the prison? but the magistrate told me, that he had, as yet, received only the report of what had passed on the preceding evening; and that he must wait till the unfortunate cause of your confinement had made a full discovery of every circumstance, which the police officer was then going about. As I was aware, that every instant you were separated was an age of torture, I hastened back to the gaol, and delivered the order which I had obtained. I then returned to the house of the police officer, who, I was informed,

had been made acquainted with the lady's history, and was employed in drawing out his final report. I waited with the utmost impatience until it was finished, when I hurried him away to the house of the magistrate. After the latter had perused this last report, he said to me—

‘I have no longer the least doubt of the innocence of your friends; for such they appear to be, by the interest which you take in their fate; but there still remain several formalities to be fulfilled, before they can be set at liberty: but if they can get bail——’

‘I will be their bail,’ replied I—‘Release my friends, and shut me up in their room.’

‘There is no occasion for that,’ said the magistrate—‘you will only have to sign a paper, making yourself responsible for their appearance before this tribunal, if it should be required.’

“I had no sooner signed a paper to that effect,

effect, than the magistrate gave me the order, which has just opened the gates of your prison."

Rosomaski and Rhodiska had several times interrupted the narrative of Ludowico, by exclamations expressive of their astonishment, admiration, and gratitude. Ludowico answered to all this overflow of their sensibility, by those words worthy of a man who was as modest as generous.

"My friends, why so many acknowledgments? You had no need of me to deliver you—I am happy enough in having been instrumental to the triumph of innocence."

Before any answer could be returned, they were surprised by the appearance of the officer of police, who had already caused them so much consternation. Whether Rhodiska betrayed any symptoms of fear or not, the officer desired them to be under no apprehensions; he was not the bearer of any more ill news, but he came

to inform them, that the young lady, who had been the innocent cause of their alarm, entertained so great a desire to see them, and express her sorrow for what had happened, that he could not refuse to acquaint them with her earnest wish, and to request their company at his house, where the lady then was.

Rosomaski and Rhodiska felt a strong impulse of curiosity, to behold a person who had herself suffered so strangely, and who had been the cause of their extraordinary sufferings. They immediately accompanied the officer to his chaise, which conducted them to his house.

It may be supposed that Theresia, who looked so beautiful even under the cloud of death, must have been capable of striking with surprise, those who should behold her all life and animation. Rosomaski and Rhodiska both thought they had never beheld a more perfect beauty: their mutual sufferings seemed to have begotten an
attachment

attachment between them, at first sight. Theresia no sooner heard them announced, than she exclaimed—

“ Ah ! how unfortunate am I to have occasioned such bitter pangs to so amiable a couple ! I shall never forgive myself.”

“ But we forgive you,” said Rhodiska, interrupting her with a lively emotion—

“ You are not our enemy, but have only been made his instrument, as other worthy people have been before you.”

“ Is it possible,” said Theresia, “ that such persons as you are, can have made so bitter an enemy ? He must be unjust, since I am assured you never can have given him any cause.”

“ Not intentionally,” replied Rosomaski —“ for we do not know, we cannot even guess, who is the person that thus hurls his secret, midnight, and malignant darts at us.”

“ That makes the affair more mysterious,” said the officer—“ If you could give

us the least clue, I warrant that we would soon ferret him out of his haunts."

"We are totally in the dark," said Rosomaski, "as to the person who thus seeks to destroy our peace, and to load us with infamy. If I knew him, I would, with my own hand, drag the monster from his den, and make him yield up his malignant soul!"

"Probably," said the officer, "if you were to recur back to all the circumstances of your life; you might be able to fix upon some person who may be likely to owe you a grudge, and he might be drawn into some snare which might be laid for him, and delivered over to justice."

"I can think but of one man," replied Rosomaski, "who ever did, or, I think, ever could owe me any enmity, and it is almost impossible that he can now be in existence: but, if you please, I will give you a sketch of my history; and probably you, who are so well accustomed to draw
out

out facts from circumstances, may be able to make a guess where we cannot."

As all the company testified their wish to hear his narrative, Rosomaski ran it over.

"Your history has been strongly marked with strange adventures," said the officer—"but there is no one I could fix upon as your secret enemy, except Lanfranco; and he, as you say, can scarcely be in existence. However, I promise you that this last affair shall not end here, and that I will strain every nerve of my office to discover the dark source."

Rosomaski and Rhodiska expressed their acknowledgments to the officer: "But," said the latter, "we are still at a loss to know how this lady came to be conveyed to a cave of our abode, of which we ourselves never knew the existence, till you pointed it out to us."

"There lies the mystery," said the officer—"Some person, intimately acquainted with the castle, must have been concerned in it; but we have no mode of tracing that person.

person. All that we know of the matter is, that an anonymous paper, containing the accusation against you, was conveyed to the chief magistrate. It also described every part of the subterraneans so accurately, that I, who had never seen them before, had, as you witnessed, not the least difficulty in finding the place where the murdered person was described to be."

"Can the lady herself give no guess?" said Rhodiska.

"Not the least, Madam," replied Theresia—"but if you are willing, I will relate to you all the particulars which I know of this affair. You must be curious, and you have an undoubted right to be made acquainted with them."

"We have indeed a curiosity," said Rhodiska.

"Then I am going to satisfy it," said Theresia.

She then went through her interesting and extraordinary narrative; and after Rosomaski and Rhodiska had apologised for recalling

recalling to her mind so painful a recollection, the latter told her, that she was extremely sorry her first visit to Vistulof should have been under such disagreeable circumstances; but that she hoped she would soon make them another, which, they were convinced, would more than compensate for the disagreeable circumstances attending the first.

Theresia made a polite reply, and expressed her determination to visit them, as soon as she could gain her mother's approbation. They then parted, with all the professions of mutual esteem.

Early the next morning, Rosomaski and Rhodiska were impatient to set out for Vistulof. Any other persons, less courageous, would have been afraid of returning to a castle full of snares, where they ran the danger of being, some day or other, buried under its ruins. But Rosomaski and Rhodiska were not easily intimidated; they were attached to their residence at Vistulof, where, in spite of the
alarms

alarms which had assailed them, they had found moments of ineffable happiness, and whose every space was marked by some delightful remembrance. Besides, the situation of itself contained many advantages capable of fixing them to it. The air was salubrious, the ground fertile, the habitation had been rendered not only convenient but elegant, and the walks around it were charmingly pleasant, varied, and picturesque. The farmers furnished them with corn, wine, and every other article necessary for the sustenance of life; and Cracow was a market sufficiently near, for them to dispose of their superfluous produce, and procure all the other wants, either of nature or luxury. But, though the proprietors had a vast share of fortitude, yet they did not want prudence. As soon as they arrived once more at Vistulof, they began to take new precautions to contribute to their safety. Two additional stout young men, the sons of one of his tenants, were taken into their service; and the windows,

and

and every other part of the exterior of the house, through which an attack was most likely to be made, were all made as secure as possible. The fire-arms, and other weapons, were put into a complete state of repair, and distributed in various parts of the castle, in such a manner, that every one knew where to find them; and all, in cases of alarm, might be ready to defend themselves in a minute.

They had scarcely finished these necessary matters, before they received a visit from Theresia and Mrs. Dauvernop, who had not been able to resist the temptation of forming an acquaintance with a couple so famous for their mutual fondness, and the fortitude with which they bore their misfortunes. Rhodiska gave Theresia the kindest reception, and expressed the greatest satisfaction at seeing her at Vistulof, at a time when they hoped they should be able to make it agreeable to her. Theresia answered the civilities of Rhodiska with much feeling; but she could not help perceiving,

ceiving, that Rhodiska and Rosomaski behaved with much coldness and reserve towards her mother. She readily guessed that, acquainted as they were with her conduct towards her daughter, they could not receive much pleasure from her company; and she hastened to endeavour to do away the ill impression which her narrative had made on them. For this purpose, she introduced, with much address, into the conversation which ensued, some sentences tending to justify Mrs. Dauvernop, and to throw all the odium of her actions upon Colonel Darnim, who had not only prevailed upon her to act as she had done, but had given her the example, by confining his son in the most dismal dungeon of the Citadel of Cracow, where he still languished. As Rhodiska and Rosomaski perceived the pious intentions of Theresia, they presently removed her anxiety, by behaving towards Mrs. Dauvernop as if she had been perfectly worthy of esteem. She really was so in every other instance,

instance, except in her blind zeal to pursue the unreasonable request of her dying husband.

As Rhodiska felt a strong inclination to know how Theresia had been received by her mother, she proposed to take a walk, and shew her guests some of the romantic scenery which surrounded Vistulof on every side. Mrs. Dauvernop and Theresia were delighted with the proposal. Rosomaski gave his hand to the former, and the latter followed them with Rhodiska. When they were in the open country, Rhodiska purposely fell some little distance behind Rosomaski and Mrs. Dauvernop, and expressed her satisfaction at seeing her mother and herself so thoroughly reconciled, and her hopes that no similar event would ever interrupt their future harmony.

“There is no danger of that,” replied Theresia—“my mother, who is a reasonable woman in every other respect, is sensible of her error in this. I am perfectly satisfied, from the reception which she has
given

given me, that I shall experience only her tenderness in future. But, as you know the former part of this adventure, it would be a pity to conceal from you the latter, which appears to me to be little less extraordinary. If the one was wonderful, the other was very extraordinary.”

Rhodiska expressed her earnest desire to hear it, and Theresia gave it to her, as will appear in the next volume.

END OF VOL. I.



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